POLYPHONY

STEPHEN LAYTON
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ENGLISH  

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RANDALL THOMPSON
21. Fare Well [9'19]
SAMUEL BARBER’S AUNT, Louise Homer, was a fine contralto, who sang at New York’s Metropolitan Opera for nineteen successive seasons. She was married to a composer primarily of songs, Sydney Homer, whose mentoring of his nephew-by-marriage was intense and long-lasting. The teenage student at Philadelphia’s Curtis Institute had a fine baritone voice himself, and from an early age was rarely without a volume of poetry by his side.

It is scarcely a surprise, then, that Barber’s output is so richly populated with music for the human voice. The Adagio for strings may be the piece with which he achieved mass recognition; but his several dozen songs, choral works and three operas make up about half of his overall output and are the ground source of his lyrical gift.

Barber’s maternal heritage, going back several generations, was Anglo-Scottish-Irish, and the composer connected early on with the Irish lyric tradition. Later, he would set a number of poems by Joyce and Yeats, together with the ancient, anonymous Irish texts of the Hermit Songs, Op 29, but an early influence was James Stephens (1880–1950). In turn, it was Stephens’ interest in the retelling of Irish myths and fairy tales that brought Barber to the Gaelic poet Antoine Ó Raifteirí (or Reachtabhra, or, more commonly in English, Raftery, 1784–1835), known as the last of the wandering bards. Raftery’s verse was given new life, through translation and elaboration, in James Stephens’ 1918 volume Reincarnations, and there is no better illustration of Barber’s masterful responsiveness to text than in his three Reincarnations settings from 1939–40.

In Mary Hynes, Barber perfectly captures the urgency and breathless excitement of passionate love (‘She is the sky of the sun, She is the dart Of love, She is the love of my heart’). With the sprung start, on the second beat of the bar, and the darting entries of different vocal lines within shifting metres, the poet’s admiration of Mary Hynes, said to be the most beautiful woman of the century, is eloquently proclaimed. With the words ‘Lovely and airy the view from the hill’, Barber’s imitative, più tranquillo transition smoothly reflects the shift of mood; still ecstatic, the breathlessness gone, and yet with a closing reference, at ‘The blossom of branches’, to the melodic contour of the opening.

Lovestruck warmth gives way to the stark anger and desperation of grief in the second Reincarnations setting, Anthony O’Daly. Intoning like a funeral bell throughout—or at least until the final page’s fortissimo climax—is the obsessive repetition of the name ‘Anthony’, first of all in the basses, later in all voice parts, always on the note E. Closely imitative writing attaches to this ‘Anthony’ pedal note, and becomes progressively more distressed until the tutti ‘Anthony’ climax. Anthony O’Daly, an activist in County Galway fighting the cause of oppressed tenant farmers, was caught and hanged in 1820 for unproven charges of attempted murder. Raftery may have witnessed the hanging himself.

James Stephens wrote of The coolin’ (which translates as ‘The fair-haired one’): ‘I sought to represent that state which is almost entirely a condition of dream, wherein the passion of love has almost overreached itself and is sinking into a motionless languor.’ Barber’s tender, lilting setting captures this (almost) ‘motionless languor’ with a delightful sense of timeless pastoral—simple lives and simple pleasures.

The time bomb of Barber’s melancholy—set to darken his later years in depressive alcoholism—would not have obviously resided alongside his privileged upbringing, good looks, precocious talent and early establishment of his lifelong relationship with fellow composer Gian Carlo Menotti. But it was already sufficiently present to produce, at the age of twenty-six, a string quartet movement of the deepest sadness, an Adagio that in its string orchestral version has become the unofficial national anthem of
mourning in the United States, far-outstripping any other piece in a 2004 BBC Radio 4 poll for the ‘saddest music in the world’. Not only has it been the most successful, even improving, of transfers from string quartet to string orchestra; Barber’s own choral arrangement of 1967, tracking the sinuous, stepwise string lines to the words of the Agnus Dei, works superbly too. The melodic contours fit like a glove for voices, unlike similar, more recent attempts to choral-ize the more intrinsically instrumental lines of Elgar’s ‘Nimrod’ with the Lux aeterna and Requiem aeternam texts.

Just prior to the creation of the string quartet, in 1935–6, Barber wrote two quite different a cappella settings that formed his Op 8. The virgin martyrs, a setting from Helen Waddell’s translation of Sigebert of Gembloux, is a charming motet for four-part female voices, motivically and harmonically subtle. Let down the bars, O death is an intense, expressive miniature, the poem by Emily Dickinson. In a letter in 1936, Barber declared: ‘I wrote a little chorus the other morning, quite good, it will be alright for someone’s funeral.’ Forty-five years later, in early 1981, it was presumably more than alright for Barber’s own funeral and subsequent memorial service—a piece carefully prescribed in advance by the composer himself, alongside Dover Beach, Summer Music for wind quintet and some organ music by Barber’s idol, J S Bach.

Some years after their composition in the late 1930s, Barber was encouraged to arrange two of his four songs, Op 13, for choir, and these were published in 1961. One of them was Sure on this shining night, a setting of James Agee (not recorded here), and the other was Gerard Manley Hopkins’ A nun takes the veil ‘Heaven-baven’ (Barber reversed Hopkins’ title). The sustained solo line and spread piano chords are transformed into a largely homophonic setting, one of great poise and reflection.

Barber’s prodigious flow of youthful composition slowed in later years, and the overwhelmingly poor reception of his third opera, Anthony and Cleopatra, written for the opening of New York’s new Metropolitan Opera in 1966, affected him greatly. But two years later he was on top form for what turned out to be his last two a cappella works, the Op 42 pairing of Laurie Lee’s Twelfth Night and Louise Bogan’s
To be sung on the water. The Laurie Lee setting is hugely atmospheric, with expertly shaded dynamics and exquisitely placed chord progressions, while the Bogan is characterized by a constant, lilting motif passing between upper and lower voices, suggestive of water-borne motion and the oar’s blade, ‘Dipping the stream once more’.

Partly because of his partner, the Italian-American Gian Carlo Menotti, Barber’s considerable European enthusiasms veered more in his youth towards Italy than to the fashionable artistic mecca of Paris. Not so for Aaron Copland, ten years Barber’s senior, who headed like many others to the French capital for lessons with Nadia Boulanger. Remaining fruitfully in this ‘boulangerie’ for three years, Copland wrote his *Four Motets* as a student exercise for his teacher in 1921, but heard them for the first time in Fontainebleau only in 1924. When they were finally published several decades later, Copland commented that he had ‘agreed to their publication with mixed emotions. While they have a certain curiosity value—perhaps people want to know what I was doing as a student—the style is not yet really mine’. He identified Musorgsky as an influence, but composers of French choral music such as Fauré—about whom Copland wrote a critical study at that time—are surely in the background too.

Each of the motets, settings of adapted Old Testament texts, maintains a discrete personality—from the gently rocking serenity of *Help us, O Lord* to the rousing jubilation of *Sing ye praises to our king*. An overall technical assurance is enhanced by moments of arresting ingenuity—such as the imitative entries at the mid-point of *Thou, O Jehovah, abidest forever*—and the delicate, two-part ostinato that establishes itself in *Have mercy on us, O my Lord*.

The twenty-year-old Harvard music student Leonard Bernstein met Aaron Copland—eighteen years his senior—at a post-concert party in November 1938. Bernstein would later say that, in the absence of a formal compositional training, Copland was the ‘only real composition teacher’ he had. Choral music, for neither composer, would become a mainstay of their output; the orchestra and the stage were much stronger pulls. There are only three choral works in the Bernstein catalogue: a short liturgical work for the Jewish Sabbath evening worship, *Hashkiveinu* (1945), the *Missa brevis* (1988) and, the best known, *Chichester Psalms* (1965).

We have the American conductor Robert Shaw to thank for the *Missa brevis*, although his planting of the idea with Bernstein took a full thirty-three years to be realized. In 1955, Bernstein composed French and Latin choruses for a play about the trial of Joan of Arc, *The Lark*. This incidental music had a deliberate medieval/Renaissance feel, and was performed (on tape) in those performances by a specialist early music group, New York Pro Musica Antiqua (SAATBB + solo). Robert Shaw’s suggestion that...
the material could be reworked as a Mass setting obviously lodged with Bernstein, because he did just that to mark Shaw’s retirement in 1988 as Music Director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

*The Lark*'s incidental music featured three French choruses—the first of which, Spring Song, became the dancing section of the Dona nobis pacem—and five Latin choruses. Robert Shaw’s suggestion of a *Missa brevis* was not surprising, because what he heard in that Broadway theatre in 1955 were Gloria, Sanctus and Benedictus movements already in place. Bernstein reworked the Prelude and Gloria from *The Lark*, which share the same assertive choral opening and countertenor solo, not only into the Gloria of the *Missa brevis*, but into the openings of the Agnus Dei and Dona nobis pacem too. And *The Lark*'s other movement, Requiem, Bernstein adroitly turned into the Kyrie. It is all a fascinating exercise in recycling and resourceful extension of material.
The prominence of percussion and a countertenor (or boy treble) solo in Bernstein’s mid-60s hit *Chichester Psalms* was not the original thing it might have seemed at the time; it was anticipated in his 1955 incidental music, and then replicated in the later *Missa brevis*. Pealing tubular bells are the main thing here, in the latter parts of the Gloria and Benedictus, together with the banquet dance-style percussion of tambourine, tabor and hand drum in the final movement. The countertenor solos, much more austere here than in *Chichester Psalms*, add to the ancient, ceremonial air of the music generally—not mock-medieval as such, but infused with a stone-vaulted, bare-fifths severity.

Aside from Aaron Copland’s mentoring, the closest Bernstein got to formal composition teaching was orchestration classes with Randall Thompson at Philadelphia’s Curtis Institute in 1939–40. Although the composer of three symphonies himself (two in 1931 and one in the late 1940s), Thompson’s own special enthusiasm was not the orchestra but the choir: between the 1920s and the year before his death in 1984 he wrote a large number of choral works, and the best known of them opens this album.

The Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Music Director, Serge Koussevitsky, asked Thompson to write a choral fanfare for the opening of the Berkshire Music Center (Tanglewood, the summer home of the BSO). Written in the first few days of July 1940, and premiered at Tanglewood on the 8th, Thompson was unable to deliver the joyous fanfare Koussevitsky had envisaged. With the sombre news of Paris’s surrender to the Germans a fortnight before, he produced a ‘slow, sad piece’ instead—while staying with the Hebrew word of praise, ‘Alleluia’, as his single-word text for the piece (though the final notes add an ‘Amen’). With its expertly graded climax from muted beginnings, Thompson’s *Alleluia* has understandably become a staple of (at least) North American choral repertoire, speaking to many through the sincerity of its emotional charge. Harmonically conservative for the time, paradoxically it was ahead of its time too, because we can hear its diatonic imprecations in much more recent music choral music—by the likes of Tavener, Górecki and Morten Lauridsen.

Thompson was born in New York City in 1899, and it was for three combined school choirs on Long Island, New York, that he wrote *Fare Well* towards the end of his life. He was commissioned by the choirs of Calhoun, Kennedy and Mepham high schools in Belmore-Merrick, and this beautifully measured, tender setting of Walter De La Mare was premiered in the Memorial Concert of their generous benefactor, Jacob Gunther, on 4 March 1973.

MEURIG BOWEN © 2015
RANDALL THOMPSON (1899–1984)

1 Alleluia
Alleluia.
Amen.

SAMUEL BARBER (1910–1981)

2 Agnus Dei
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, you who take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.

REINCARNATIONS Op 16

3 Mary Hynes
She is the sky of the sun,
She is the dart
Of love,
She is the love of my heart,
She is a rune,
She is above
The women of the race of Eve
As the sun is above the moon.

Lovely and airy the view from the hill
That looks down from Ballylea;
But no good sight is good until
By great good luck you see
The blossom of branches walking towards you
Airily.

JAMES STEPHENS (1880–1950)
after the Irish of Antoine Ó Raifteirí (1784–1835)
printed by permission of the Estate of James Stephens
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Anthony O’Daly
Since your limbs were laid out
The stars do not shine,
The fish leap not out
In the waves.
On our meadows the dew
Does not fall in the morn,
For O’Daly is dead:
Not a flower can be born,
Not a word can be said,
Not a tree have a leaf;
Anthony, after you
There is nothing to do,
There is nothing but grief.

JAMES STEPHENS (1880–1950)
after the Irish of Antoine Ó Raifteirí (1784–1835)
printed by permission of the Estate of James Stephens
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The coolin’
Come with me, under my coat,
And we will drink our fill
Of the milk of the white goat,
Or wine if it be thy will;
And we will talk until
Talk is a trouble, too,
Out on the side of the hill,
And nothing is left to do,
But an eye to look into an eye
And a hand in a hand to slip,
And a sigh to answer a sigh,
And a lip to find out a lip:
What if the night be black
And the air on the mountain chill,
Where the goat lies down in her track
And all but the fern is still!
Stay with me, under my coat,
And we will drink our fill
Of the milk of the white goat
Out on the side of the hill.

JAMES STEPHENS (1880–1950)
after the Irish of Antoine Ó Raifteirí (1784–1835)
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LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–1990)

Missa brevis

DAVID ALLSOPP countertenor [7] [9] [10]
CHRISTOPHER LOWREY countertenor [8] [11]

6 Kyrie
Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

7 Gloria
Gloria in excelsis Deo
et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te. Benedictimus te.
Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.
Domine Deus, rex caelestis, 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.

Glorify be to God on high
and on earth peace, good will towards men.
We praise you. We bless you.
We worship you. We glorify you.
We give thanks to you for your great glory.
Lord God, heavenly king, God the Father almighty,
Lord the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.
You who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
You who take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.
You who sit at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.
For you alone are holy. You alone are the Lord.
You alone are most bigh, Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

8 Sanctus
Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Osanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth.
The heavens and the earth are full of your glory.
Osanna in the biggest.

9 Benedictus
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Osanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Osanna in the biggest.

10 Agnus Dei
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.

Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.
Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.

11 Dona nobis pacem
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.

12 Help us, O Lord
Help us, O Lord.
For with thee is the fount of life.
In thy light shall we see light.
Let us march and try our ways.
Turn to God.
It is good that man should wait.
It is good that man should hope for the salvation of the Lord.

AARON COPLAND (1900–1990)

Four Motets
13 **Thou, O Jehovah, abideth forever**
Thou, O Jehovah, abideth forever.
God reigneth over all men and nations.
His throne doth last and doth guide all the ages.
Wherefore willst thou forsake us ever?
When willst thou forget us never?
Thou, O Jehovah, abideth forever,
and all the length of our days will ever be our saviour.

14 **Have mercy on us, O my Lord**
Have mercy on us, O my Lord.
Be not far from us, O my God.
Give ear unto our humble prayer.
Attend and judge us in thy might.
Uphold us with thy guiding hand.
Restore us to thy kindly light.
O my heart is sorely pained
and calls on thee in vain.
Cast me not away from thee.
O cast me not away from salvation.
Then, oh then, we shall trust in thee,
then we will hear our place.

15 **Sing ye praises to our king**
Sing ye praises to our king and ruler.
Come and hear all ye men.
Come and hear my praises.
He doth bless all the earth,
bringeth peace and comfort.
Shout unto God all ye men.
Shout unto God all your praises.
Sing ye praises to our king.
Come and praise him all ye men.
Shout and praise him all ye men.
He doth bless all the earth,
bringeth peace to all men.

**SAMUEL BARBER (1910–1981)**

16 **Twelfth Night**  **Op 42 No 1**
No night could be darker than this night,
no cold so cold,
as the blood snaps like a wire,
and the heart’s sap stills,
and the year seems defeated.

O never again, it seems, can green things run,
or sky birds fly,
or the grass exhale its humming breath
powdered with pimpernels,
from this dark lung of winter.

Yet here are lessons from the final mile
of pilgrim kings;
the mile still left when all have reached
their tether’s end: that mile
where the Child lies hid.

For see, beneath the hand, the earth already
warms and glows;
for men with shepherd’s eyes there are
signs in the dark, the turning stars,
the lamb’s returning time.

Out of this utter death he’s born again,
his birth our saviour;
from terror’s equinox he climbs and grows,
drawing his finger’s light across our blood—
the sun of heaven, and the son of god.

**LAURENCE EDWARD ALAN ‘LAURIE’ LEE (1914–1997)**

17 **To be sung on the water**  **Op 42 No 2**
Beautiful, my delight,
Pass, as we pass the wave.
Pass, as the mottled night
Leaves what it cannot save,
Scattering dark and bright.

Beautiful, pass and be
Less than the guiltless shade
To which our vows were said;
Less than the sound of the oar
To which our vows were made,—
Less than the sound of its blade
Dipping the stream once more.

**LOUISE BOGAN (1897–1970)**
18 **A nun takes the veil ‘Heaven-haven’**  
*Op 13 No 1*  
I have desired to go  
Where springs not fail,  
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail  
And a few lilies blow.  
And I have asked to be  
Where no storms come,  
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,  
And out of the swing of the sea.  
GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS (1844–1889)

19 **The virgin martyrs**  
*Op 8 No 1*  
Therefore come they, the crowding maidens,  
Gertrude, Agnes, Prisca, Cecily,  
Lucy, Thekla, Juliana,  
Barbara, Agatha, Petronel.  
And other maids whose names I have read not,  
Names I have read and now record not,  
But their souls and their faith were maimed not,  
Worthy now of God’s company.  
Wandering through the fresh fields go they,  
Gathering flowers to make them a nosegay,  
Gathering roses red for the Passion,  
Lilies and violets for love.  
HELEN JANE WADDELL (1889–1965)  
after a Latin text by Sigebert of Gembloux (c1030–1112)  
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20 **Let down the bars, O death**  
*Op 8 No 2*  
Let down the bars, O death!  
The tired flocks come in  
Whose bleating ceases to repeat,  
Whose wandering is done.  
Thine is the stillest night,  
Thine the securest fold;  
Too near thou art for seeking thee,  
Too tender to be told.  
EMILY DICKINSON (1830–1886)
Polyphony was formed by Stephen Layton in 1986 for a concert in King’s College Chapel, Cambridge. Since then the choir has performed and recorded regularly to critical acclaim throughout the world, and has been described by Gramophone as being ‘renowned for both their sound and versatility—whether in early music or contemporary works . . . they embody the remarkable tradition of British choral excellence at its finest’. This has been reinforced by Grammy Award nominations for recordings of Eric Whitacre (Cloudburst) and Morten Lauridsen (Lux aeterna), and a Gramophone Award and Diapason d’Or for their Britten recording.

In addition to their annual sell-out performances of Bach’s St John Passion and Handel’s Messiah at St John’s, Smith Square, which have been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and the EBU, Polyphony has made many appearances at the BBC Proms since 1995, at Snape Maltings in Aldeburgh, Champs Elysées in Paris, Het Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and festivals in Belfast, Dublin, Cheltenham and Antwerp. The choir, under the direction of Stephen Layton, regularly collaborates with the City of London Sinfonia, Philharmonia Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

Polyphony’s extensive discography on Hyperion encompasses the choral riches of nineteenth- and twentieth-century composers, including Bruckner, Grieg, Grainger, Britten, Poulenc and Walton. An important and substantial body of work has also resulted from Polyphony’s collaboration with contemporary composers, including Tavener, Pärt, Rutter, Lauridsen, Whitacre, Lukaszewski and Ešenvalds. The choir’s recording of Bruckner’s Mass in E minor and motets moved Gramophone to write: ‘Put simply, we’re unlikely to hear choral singing as fine as this for a good few years to come.’

**POLYPHONY (2011 sessions)**

**soprano** Esther Brazil*, Zoë Brown, Alison Hill, Emilia Morton, Laura Oldfield (solo, tracks 2 & 18), Katie Thomas*, Genevieve Wakelin, Emma Walshe, Louise Wayman, Amy Wood

**alto** David Allsopp (solo, tracks 7 & 10), Catherine Backhouse, Aaron Burchell*, Ruth Kiang, Christopher Lowrey (solo, tracks 8 & 11), Ruth Massey (solo, track 15), Katherine Nicholson, Tom Williams*

**tenor** Ronan Busfield, David de Winter, Jonathan English, Julian Forbes, Benedict Hymas (solo, track 19), Oliver Jones, Peter Morton*, Nicholas Todd


* Barber Agnus Dei and Bernstein Missa brevis only

**POLYPHONY (2013 sessions)**

**soprano** Rachel Ambrose Evans, Zoë Brown, Rosemary Galton, Alison Hill, Emilia Morton, Laura Oldfield, Hannah Partridge, Louise Prickett, Genevieve Wakelin, Emma Walshe, Louise Wayman, Amy Wood

**alto** David Allsopp, Catherine Backhouse, Helen Charlston, Jessica Dandy, Ruth Kiang, Christopher Lowrey, Amy Lyddon-Towl, Ruth Massey, Eleanor Minney, Katherine Nicholson, Simon Ponsford

**tenor** Gwilym Bowen, Ronan Busfield, Jonathan English, Christopher Hann, Benedict Hymas, Oliver Jones

**bass** Richard Bannan, Michael Craddock, Dominic Kraemer, Richard Savage, Simon Whiteley, Laurence Williams
Stephen Layton succeeded the late Richard Hickox as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the City of London Sinfonia in 2010. He guest-conducts widely and has appeared in recent years with the Seattle Symphony, and the Philadelphia and Minnesota orchestras, the Melbourne Symphony and Auckland Philharmonia, the London Philharmonic, the Philharmonia and the Hallé, the Academy of Ancient Music, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Britten Sinfonia. Layton is Fellow and Director of Music of Trinity College Cambridge. He is the Founder and Director of Polyphony. His former posts include Chief Guest Conductor of the Danish National Vocal Ensemble and Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Kammerkoor.

Stephen Layton’s discography ranges from Bach and Handel with original instruments to Bruckner and Poulenc, Pärt and Tavener, Łukaszewski and Whitacre. A champion of new music, Stephen Layton has premiered much new repertoire by living composers. His recordings have won awards worldwide, including from Gramophone and BBC Music Magazine, and in the USA he has had four Grammy nominations.
Also available

MORTEN LAURIDSEN (b1943)
Lux aeterna & other choral works
Lux aeterna; Madrigali: Six ‘Fire Songs’ on Italian Renaissance Poems; Ave Maria; Ubi caritas et amor; O magnum mysterium
POLYPHONY, BRITTEN SINFONIA / STEPHEN LAYTON conductor
CDA67449
‘It’s not often I have to brush away the tears when I’m reviewing a recording, but I will happily confess that on this occasion Lauridsen got me again and again … Run out and buy it as soon as you can’ (Fanfare, USA) ‘The finest I’ve heard among several excellent collections of Lauridsen’s work. None are quite as exquisitely nuanced or sung with such glowing vocal sheen as this’ (American Record Guide) ‘Exquisitely sung’ (The Observer)

MORTEN LAURIDSEN
Nocturnes & other choral works
Mid-Winter Songs; Les chansons des roses; I will lift up mine eyes; O come, let us sing unto the Lord; Ave, dulcissima Maria; Nocturnes
POLYPHONY, BRITTEN SINFONIA / STEPHEN LAYTON conductor
CDA67580
‘What more can one say of the singing other than that it is Polyphony? This ensemble—surely one of the best small choirs now before the public—invests everything it sings with insight, crisp ensemble and tonal warmth’ (The Daily Telegraph) ‘Should be on the shelf of each and every choral-music aficionado’ (Fanfare, USA)

ERIC WHITACRE (b1970)
Cloudburst & other choral works
POLYPHONY / STEPHEN LAYTON conductor
CDA67543
‘Here’s a CD to put the hype back into Hyperion … extraordinarily beautiful … the recording is blessed with top performers in the choir Polyphony under the conductor Stephen Layton, who carefully shapes the recitativo phrasing and demands crystal clarity in diction and ensemble. Hyperion has a winner’ (The Times) ‘Ethereal and chillingly beautiful choral works—an intense and moving aural experience’ (The Independent on Sunday)