



Choral music by CHILCOTT • DOVE • DUBRA • EŠENVALDS  
GOWERS • JACKSON • McDOWALL • MEALOR • PANUFNIK  
RUTTER • STOPFORD • TODD • WEIR • WHITACRE

# Heaven full of Stars

• Martin Ford, Organ



Jeremy Backhouse

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<b>Jonathan DOVE</b> (b. 1959) 2 Seek him that maketh the seven stars (1995) (Text: from Amos 5:8 and Psalm 139)	6:31	<b>Paul MEALOR</b> (b. 1975) 11 Ave maris stella (2013) (Text: Anonymous, medieval)	4:05
<b>Ēriks EŠENVALDS</b> 3 O salutaris hostia (2009) (Text: St Thomas Aquinas, 1225–1274, translated by Edward Caswell, 1814–1878)	3:31	<b>Judith WEIR</b> (b. 1954) Two Human Hymns 12 No. 2. Like to the falling of a star (1994) (Text: Henry King, 1592–1669)	3:18
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## Heaven full of stars

Throughout the 40 years of our music making, the performance of contemporary sacred (particularly, but also secular) choral music has been central to the choir's existence, flowing through its veins like lifeblood. So, when it came to settling on an idea for a 40th Anniversary recording, the choice of a collection of anthems by (mostly) living composers was a natural and obvious one.

In recent years, by chance, we have sung a number of anthems with a star-based theme (for example, Jonathan Dove's *Seek him that maketh the seven stars*), and we expanded this idea to investigate other starry motets. The decision was not so much what we could fill an album with, more what we had to leave out, such was the breadth of suitable repertoire. (With apologies to those wonderful composers who missed out – we could have filled two albums!)

In the end, we kept the choice mainly to British composers, though we couldn't resist Eric Whitacre's *Lux aurumque* and some beautiful offerings from two Latvian composers, Ešenvalds and Dubra. We were keen to have a representation of women composers as well, so we picked three wonderful pieces by Judith Weir, Roxanna Panufnik and Cecilia McDowall. We also enjoyed selecting works that required other instruments – you will hear an exquisite cello solo and a radiant bell in Bob Chilcott's *Lovely tear of lovely eye* and the ethereal sound of wine glasses (water-filled!) being played in *Stars*.

The star-themed link to many of the anthems will be obvious, to other pieces perhaps less so; some you might think tenuous; some have no link at all, but we loved some anthems so much we couldn't bear not to let them feature. We believe there is a huge variety and plenty that will appeal to all tastes. We really hope you enjoy listening to our performances as much as we enjoyed recording them.

We are proud of what we have achieved over 40 years, for the contribution we have made to the choral repertoire through our many commissions and our unwavering dedication to the promotion and performance of contemporary music. We sincerely hope this recording reflects that commitment.

Jeremy Backhouse

1 **Ēriks Ešenvalds** (b. 1977): **Stars** (2011)  
Latvian composer Eriks Ešenvalds was Fellow Commoner in Creative Arts at Trinity College, Cambridge from 2011 to 2013 and now teaches at the Latvian Academy of Music. He was commissioned to write *Stars* by the Salt Lake Vocal Artists and Salt Lake Choral Artists in 2011 setting words by the American Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Sara Teasdale. Ešenvalds has used her lyric poems on several occasions; here she muses with awe on the beauty of the night sky. Her lovely words are accompanied throughout by tuned wine glasses whose eerie sounds seem to come from and return to nothingness.

2 **Jonathan Dove** (b. 1959): **Seek him that maketh the seven stars** (1995)  
After studies in Cambridge, Jonathan Dove worked extensively with singers in a variety of roles and so choral music has been central to his output. He is particularly known in the UK for his involvement in many collaborative community opera projects. *Seek him that maketh the seven stars* was commissioned by the Friends of the Royal Academy of Arts for their annual service for artists. The anthem begins with a musical image of the night sky, a repeated organ motif of twinkling stars that sets the choir wondering who made them, initially cautiously and then increasingly urgently. The piece starts in devotional longing, swelling periodically into seraphic chords and is eventually released into a joyful dance, finally coming to rest in serenity.

3 **Ēriks Ešenvalds**: **O salutaris hostia** (2009)  
This full-choir version of Aquinas's hymn for the Feast of Corpus Christi was originally scored for female voices. It is a meditative piece which never gets particularly loud, suitable for adoration of the blessed sacrament, the bread and wine transformed into the body and blood of Christ in Christian belief. The quiet chords sung by the choir provide the foundation for the glorious soprano soloists' duet. Their voices, high above the rest of the choir, weave in and out of each other, sometimes together in harmony, sometimes echoing each other, to make a gorgeous, prayerfully ecstatic whole.

④ **Patrick Gowers** (1936–2014): **Viri Galilaei** (1987)  
Patrick Gowers was well known in his native UK for his television and film music, and that ability to paint vividly in music is evident in this dramatic anthem for Ascension. The composer's instructions are that the opening organ should sound glittering and bell-like: the listener is called to attention for the ensuing overlapping 'alleluias' which build up as if sung by an angelic host. (These and the *pianissimo* figure played on the trumpet stop on the organ at the beginning of the piece were sampled by Björk in *Unison* on the 2001 album *Vespertine*.) Gowers' ethereal chords narrate the disciples' wonder and gradually the music blossoms into a glorious, majestic hymn of praise, positively galloping off the page. The piece eventually subsides back into the more reflective mode of the beginning. The organ has been overdubbed on this recording.

⑤ **Philip Stopford** (b. 1977): **Ave Maria** (2017)  
Philip Stopford's musical education includes having been a chorister at Westminster Abbey and organ scholar at Keble College Oxford. Since 2016 he has been director of music at Christ Church Bronxville, but it was when he was filling that same role at St Anne's Cathedral Belfast that he wrote this *Ave Maria*. Originally scored for the men's voices of the choir there, the two soprano lines were added a year later when the work was sung at a joint advent carol service of the choir of St Anne's and its sister cathedral St Peter's. This version in fact starts with tenors and basses singing the beautiful flowing melody in unison and the tune then passes round the choir with harmonies added. Although essentially uplifting in mood with a soaring soprano line, the introduction of unexpected flattened notes lends a greater reflective emphasis, appropriate for the words of this prayer familiar to Catholics the world over.

⑥ **Cecilia McDowall** (b. 1951): **Aurea luce** (2010)  
In 2017 Cecilia McDowall was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal School of Church Music, an accolade which firmly establishes her among the best writers of contemporary liturgical music. Her strong sense of rhythm, such as in the repeated quaver motif in the organ and the

irregular interjections from the choir, and her expressive, sonorous lyricism are both very much in evidence in *Aurea luce*. It was commissioned and first performed by the choir of Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral, setting words said to be by Elpis, the first wife of 6th-century Roman senator and philosopher Boethius. She wrote this hymn for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, celebrating the beauty of the Roman sunrise and Rome as a city made truly imperial red-purple by the blood of martyrs. McDowall's setting does justice to both these aims, combining a sense of joy with moments of reflection.

⑦ **Rihards Dubra** (b. 1964): **O crux ave** (1994)  
Rihards Dubra is a Latvian composer whose output all has spiritual roots, most of it overtly sacred. Dubra believes that music's main purpose is to affect the hearer through the emotions, seeking to do this with musical simplicity rather than technical fireworks. This brief and exquisitely formed motet achieves this perfectly: the first line is repeated at the end with no embellishment, encasing the inner lines of verse. The whole is a calm and reflective setting of this hymn of adoration of the cross, such as might have originally been intended to be sung in the Good Friday liturgy in Christian worship.

⑧ **Roxanna Panufnik** (b. 1968): **Deus est caritas** (2017)  
Roxanna Panufnik is a prolific composer for a wide range of types of ensembles and forms, including opera and film music as well as works for choirs. *Deus est caritas* was commissioned for the choir of Peterborough Cathedral by one of their lay clerks, Marius Carney, in memory of his parents. Panufnik said of this piece that 'Marius asked for "profound joy"; I hope I've managed to convey this with bright and vivacious harmonies and church peals.' It sets words from the first letter of John in the New Testament focussing on the loving nature of God.

⑨ **Will Todd** (b. 1970): **Christ is the Morning Star** (1995)  
Will Todd's *oeuvre* encompasses choral works large and small, opera, musical theatre and orchestral pieces, as well as jazz compositions and chamber works. Jazz influences can often be heard in Todd's music and this

work is no exception, with dense chordal writing embedded in the repeated motifs. The effect is one of radiance: the morning star rises in our minds' eyes. The text, originally chosen to set for a wedding, is paraphrased from one of the Venerable Bede's prayers which appears on the wall above his tomb in Durham Cathedral, in Todd's native city.

⑩ **John Rutter** (b. 1945): **For the beauty of the earth** (1980)  
A prolific composer of sacred choral music since his days as a student at Cambridge, John Rutter needs little introduction to anglophone aficionados of choral music. He returned to Clare College, Cambridge to be its director of music, later founded the Cambridge Singers and is now one of the most famous choral composers, arrangers and conductors worldwide. This deceptively simple setting of the popular eucharist hymn features a flowing melody initially sung in unison. When the harmonies appear they are unfussy and the composer instructs the accompaniment to be played 'happily'. That and the several upward modulations do indeed convey joy in and thanks for creation.

⑪ **Paul Mealor** (b. 1975): **Ave maris stella** (2013)  
Paul Mealor was thrust into the limelight when his motet *Ubi caritas* was sung at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and he has since become one of the most performed living composers. As a boy in Wales he studied with William Mathias and is now professor of composition at the University of Aberdeen. His choral music tends to be measured, calm and ethereally beautiful and *Ave maris stella* is no exception. The text is a hymn from the Office of Vespers to Mary, the Mother of God, and as it describes her as star of the sea it has often been used to seek her protection for travellers, particularly sailors. Mealor starts and ends his setting with female voices only, emphasising the ethereal nature of the music, and while the piece does reach *fff*, it nevertheless retains a sense of peaceful calm.

⑫ **Judith Weir** (b. 1954): **Two Human Hymns – No. 2. Like to the falling of a star** (1994)  
Judith Weir studied with John Tavener at school and continued her studies at Cambridge. She is the first female composer to hold the position of Master of the Queen's Music. This charming piece is one of a pair which the composer calls *Two Human Hymns*, both setting texts by 17th-century English poets, which although clearly relating to Christian beliefs, could be applied to all human experience. Weir sees these words as resembling a Calvinist sermon: the hearer is uplifted by the beauty of creation and then reminded, perhaps crushingly, of their sinful destructive place in the world. She perfectly captures the beautiful image of a falling star which starts the work's optimistic account of the wonders of nature, but the music reaches, in the composer's words 'an almost operatically sinister denouement', descending in pitch and volume, echoing the descent all doomed sinners must make in the belief system of a 17th-century preacher.

⑬ **Eric Whitacre** (b. 1970): **Lux aurumque** (2000)  
Eric Whitacre studied at The Juilliard School in New York and has since become one of the most successful composers working today; his innovations such as the virtual choir have helped the world's music lovers take him to their hearts and provided an unexpected blueprint for music making at home during the COVID-19 lockdown of 2020. This simple but beautiful poem encapsulates in almost haiku form the singing of angels at the birth of Jesus. Whitacre takes these words, now rendered into Latin, and enables us through his music to envisage and experience the peaceful but ecstatic prayerful atmosphere. The composer is clear that the key to this piece is a simplicity of approach; so from the opening burgeoning chords from which rises exquisitely a solo soprano voice, to the final intense *ppp* note in the sopranos held for eleven bars while the rest of the choir provides stabilising chords beneath, the harmonies shimmer and glow like the gold and light described in the poem.



14 Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962):

**Creator of the stars of night** (2000)

Gabriel Jackson has had a long association with Vasari Singers and this piece encapsulates perfectly features of his choral music which are both familiar to and beloved of the choir. A rising melody embellished with grace notes starts in the soprano line over a single held note in the tenors; as this piece was commissioned for the choir of St Mary's Cathedral Edinburgh it is difficult not to hear the influence of traditional Scottish music. By the time the organ enters with fast, high, sparkling arpeggios, the choir has swelled to a glorious hymn of praise, subsiding eventually to a reprise of the beautiful opening motif, this time the concluding word 'Amen' sung by a solo soprano over a denser ethereal, drone-like chord shared by the three lower voices.

15-16 Bob Chilcott (b. 1955): **Salisbury Motets** (2009)

Bob Chilcott has always been immersed in the UK's choral tradition having been a chorister and choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge, and a member of the King's Singers for 12 years, before turning to composition full time in 1997. The four motets which make up this set are taken from his substantial sacred work, the *Salisbury Vespers*, which was premiered in 2009 with 500 singers from seven Salisbury choirs, the conducting being shared at either end of the nave by the cathedral organist, David Halls and Jeremy Backhouse. The motets are settings of Marian texts, reflecting the dedication of Salisbury Cathedral to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The first is a Christmas text from the 15th century, and the second, which tells of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, sets a 16th-century text by Johannes Eccard translated by the 19th-century cleric John Troutbeck. The third is a 14th-century contemplation on Christ's Passion, and the last is a song of praise to Mary taken from the Sarum Rite, a 1516 liturgy.

Julia Ridout

1 Ēriks Ešenvalds: **Stars**

Alone in the night  
On a dark hill  
With pines around me  
Spicy and still,

And a heaven full of stars  
Over my head,  
White and topaz  
And misty red;

Myriads with beating  
Hearts of fire  
The aeons  
Cannot vex or tire;

The dome of heaven  
Like a great hill,

I know I  
Am honored to be  
Witness  
Of so much majesty.

Sara Teasdale, 1884–1933

2 Jonathan Dove: **Seek him that maketh the seven stars**

Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion  
And turneth the shadow of death into the morning.  
Alleluia, yea, the darkness shineth as the day, the night is light about me.

From Amos 5:8 and Psalm 139

3 Ēriks Ešenvalds: **O salutaris hostia**

O salutaris hostia,  
Quae coeli pandis ostium:  
Bella premunt hostilia,  
Da robur, fer auxilium.

*O saving Victim, open wide  
The gate of Heaven to man below;  
Our foes press on from every side;  
Your aid supply; your strength bestow.*

Uni trinoque Domino  
Sit sempiterna gloria,  
Qui vitam sine termino  
Nobis donet in patria.  
Amen.

*To your great name be endless praise;  
Immortal Godhead, One in Three;  
Grant us, for endless length of days,  
In our true native land to be.  
Amen.*

*St Thomas Aquinas, 1225–1274, translated by Edward Caswell, 1814–1878*

4 Patrick Gowers: Viri Galilæi

Alleluia.  
And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;  
Which said unto them: Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up to heaven?  
In like manner as ye have seen him going up into heaven, so shall he come again.  
God is gone up with a merry noise, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet.  
Christ to highest heaven ascending, led captivity captive.  
Sing ye to the Lord who ascended to the heaven of heavens to the sun rising.

See the Conqueror mounts in triumph,  
See the King in royal state,  
Riding on the clouds his chariot  
To his heavenly palace gate;  
Hark! the choirs of angel voices  
Joyful Alleluias sing,  
And the portals high are lifted  
To receive their heav'nly King.

*From the Proper of the Mass for Ascension and Bishop Christopher Wordsworth, 1807–1885*

5 Philip Stopford: Ave Maria

Ave Maria,  
Gratia plena,  
Dominus tecum.  
Benedicta tu in mulieribus  
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus

*Hail Mary,  
Full of grace,  
The Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou amongst women  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*

Sancta Maria  
Mater Dei  
Ora pro nobis peccatoribus  
Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.  
Amen.

*Holy Mary,  
Mother of God  
Pray for us  
Now and at the hour of our death.  
Amen.*

*Medieval prayer from various sources, traditional translation*

6 Cecilia McDowall: Aurea luce

Aurea luce et decore roseo,  
Lux lucis, omne perfudisti saeculum:  
decorans caelos inclito martyrio.  
Hac sacra die, quae dat reis veniam.

*Light of light, you have flooded every age with  
golden light and rosy splendour,  
adorning the heavens with glorious martyrdom,  
on this sacred day which pardons sinners.*

*Attrib. Elpis, c. 493*

7 Rihards Dubra: O crux ave

O crux ave, spes unica,  
hoc passionis tempore.  
Auge piis justitiam  
reisque dona veniam.

*O hail the cross, our only hope  
in this passiontide.  
Increase grace to believers  
and remove the sins of the guilty.*

*Anonymous, 10th century*

8 Roxanna Panufnik: Deus est caritas

Deus est caritas.  
Qui manet in caritate manet in Deo et Deus in illo.  
Sit Deus in nobis, et nos maneamus in illo.

*God is love.  
Who abides in love abides in God and God in him.  
May God be in us and may we abide in him.*

*1 John 4:15–16*

9 Will Todd: Christ is the Morning Star

Christ is the Morning Star,  
Christ is the Light of Life,  
Christ is the Morning Star.  
His day is everlasting, and when the night of this dark world is past, He brings light.  
Christ is the Morning Star who when the night of this world is past brings to his saints the promise of Light and Life of Life.

*Saint Bede, c. 672–735, translated by David Crane*

10 John Rutter: For the beauty of the earth

For the beauty of the earth,  
For the beauty of the skies,  
For the love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies:  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our joyful hymn of praise.

For the beauty of each hour  
Of the day and of the night,  
Hill and vale and tree and flower,  
Sun and moon and stars of light:  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our joyful hymn of praise.

For the joy of human love,  
Brother, sister, parent, child,  
Friends on earth, and friends above,  
For all gentle thoughts and mild:  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our joyful hymn of praise.

For each perfect gift of thine  
To our race so freely given,  
Graces human and divine,  
Flow'rs of earth, and buds of heav'n:  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our joyful hymn of praise.

Folliott Sandford Pierpoint 1835–1917

11 Paul Mealor: Ave maris stella

*Ave, maris stella,  
Dei mater alma,  
atque semper virgo,  
felix caeli porta.*

Hail, star of the sea,  
Nurturing Mother of God,  
And ever virgin  
Happy gate of heaven.

*Solve vincla reis,  
profer lumen caecis,  
mala nostra pelle,  
bona cuncta posce.*

*Vitam praesta puram,  
iter para tutum,  
ut videntes Jesum  
semper collaetemur.  
Amen*

Loosen the chains of the guilty,  
Send forth light to the blind,  
Dispel our evil,  
Entreat all good things.

Bestow a pure life,  
Prepare a safe way:  
That seeing Jesus,  
We may always rejoice.  
Amen

Anonymous, medieval

12 Judith Weir: Two Human Hymns – No. 2. Like to the falling of a star

Like to the falling of a star,  
Or as the flights of eagles are;  
Or like the fresh spring's gaudy hue,  
Or silver drops of morning dew;  
Or like the wind that chafes the flood;  
Or bubbles which on water stood;  
Even such is man, whose borrowed light  
Is straight called in and paid to night.

The winds blow out; the bubble dies;  
The spring entombed in autumn lies;  
The dew dries up; the star is shot;  
The flight is past; and man forgot.

Henry King, 1592–1669

13 Eric Whitacre: Lux aurumque

*Lux,  
calida gravisque  
pura velut aurum  
et canunt angeli  
molliter modo natum.*

Light,  
warm and heavy  
as pure gold,  
and the angels sing softly  
to the newborn babe.

Edward Esch, b. 1970, translated into Latin by Charles Anthony Silvestri, b. 1965

#### 14 Gabriel Jackson: Creator of the stars of night

Creator of the stars of night,  
Thy people's everlasting light,  
Jesu, Redeemer, save us all,  
And hear Thy servants when they call.

Thou camest, Bridegroom of the bride,  
As drew the world to evening-tide;  
Proceeding from a virgin shrine,  
The spotless Victim all divine.

At Thy great name, exalted now,  
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow;  
And things in heav'n and earth shall own  
That Thou art Lord and King alone.

To God the Father, God the Son,  
And God the Spirit, Three in One,  
Laud, honour, might, and glory be  
From age to age eternally.  
Amen.

*Anonymous, 7th century, translated by John Mason Neale, 1818–1866*

#### Bob Chilcott: Salisbury Motets

##### 15 No. 1. I sing of a mayden

I sing of a mayden  
That is makêles:  
King of all Kings  
To her son she ches.  
He came also stille  
Where his moder was,  
As dew in Aprille  
That falleth on the grass.  
He came also stille  
To his moder's bour,  
As dew in Aprille  
That falleth on the flour.

He came also stille  
There his moder lay,  
As dew in Aprille  
That falleth on the spray.  
Moder and mayden  
Was never none but she:  
Well may such a lady  
Goddess moder be.

*Anonymous, 15th century*

*makêles = matchless  
ches = chose  
moder = mother  
bour = bower (womb)  
flour = flower*

##### 16 No. 2. When to the temple Mary went

When to the temple Mary went,  
And brought the Holy Child,  
Him did the aged Simeon see,  
As it had been revealed.  
He took up Jesus in his arms  
And, blessing God, he said:  
'In peace I now depart,  
My Saviour having seen,  
The hope of Israel,  
The light of men.'  
Help now thy servants, gracious Lord,  
That we may ever be,  
As once the faithful Simeon was,  
Rejoicing but in thee:  
And when we must from  
Earth departure take,  
May we gently fall asleep,  
And with thee awake.

*Johannes Eccard, 1553–1611, translated by Revd John Troutbeck, 1832–1899*

**17 No. 3. Lovely tear of lovely eye**

Lovely tear of lovely eye,  
Why dost thou me so woe?  
Sorrowful tear of sorrowful eye,  
Thou breakest my heart in two.

Thou grieveest sore, thy sorrow is more  
Than mankind's mouth may tell;  
Thou singst of sorrow, mankind to borrow,  
Out of the pit of hell.  
Lovely tear of lovely eye ...

Thy mother sees what woe is to thee,  
And earnestly cries out;  
To her thou speak, her sorrow to ease;  
Sweet pleading won thy heart.  
Lovely tear of lovely eye ...

Thy heart is rent, thy body bent  
Upon the rood tree;  
The weather is passed, the devil defeated,  
Christ, through the might of thee.  
Lovely tear of lovely eye ...

*Anonymous, 14th century*

**18 No. 4. Hail, Star of the sea most radiant**

Hail, Star of the sea most radiant,  
O mother of God most glorious,  
A pure virgin always persevering.  
O gate of heaven most gorgeous,  
Thou was saluted with great humility  
When Gabriel said Ave Maria,  
Establish us in peace and tranquillity,  
And change the name of sinful Eve.  
Loose the prisoners from captivity.  
Unto the blind give sight again.  
Deliver us from our malignity  
To the end we may some grace attain.  
Hail, Star of the sea most radiant.  
O Mother of God.

*Taken from the Sarum Primer, 1516*

**Martin Ford**



Martin Ford is the organist and director of music at The Guards' Chapel. He read music at Oxford University before continuing his studies at the Royal College of Music. Ford has held organ scholarships at Southwark Cathedral and Magdalen College, Oxford, and has served as assistant organist at St Martin-in-the-Fields and Westminster Abbey and sub-organist of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. He has given solo recitals in venues such as St Paul's Cathedral and Église Saint-Sulpice, Paris, as well as accompanying numerous broadcasts on BBC radio and television. As a piano accompanist, Ford regularly appears in recitals with a variety of solo singers, as well as playing for larger ensembles. His discography includes releases on the Naxos and harmonia mundi labels.

**Muriel Daniels**



Muriel Daniels began her professional career as a member of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, followed by twelve years playing in the BBC Symphony and Concert Orchestras. She was also a founder member of the London Festival Orchestra with whom she appeared as soloist on several occasions. As a freelance player she has worked with other major orchestras including the Philharmonia, the Royal Opera House, the Royal Philharmonic, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Welsh National Opera and various chamber orchestras, and has performed internationally with eminent conductors and soloists. Daniels is also the cellist of The Eberle Quartet.



## Jeremy Backhouse



Photo: Ash Mills

Jeremy Backhouse is one of Britain's leading choral conductors. He began his musical career in Canterbury Cathedral where he was senior chorister. Backhouse has been the sole conductor of the internationally renowned chamber choir Vasari Singers since its inception in 1980. In 1995, Backhouse was appointed music director of (the now) Vivace Chorus. Alongside the standard classical works, he has conducted the choir in some ambitious programmes, most notably Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand* (No. 8) and Verdi's *Requiem*, both in the Royal Albert Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In May 2017, the chorus gave the world premiere performance of its latest commission, *Cantus Maris* by Francis Pott, in the Royal Festival Hall with the Philharmonia Orchestra. In 2009, Backhouse was appointed music director of the Salisbury Community Choir, which celebrated its 21st anniversary in 2013 by commissioning a major new work, *The City Garden*, from Will Todd and giving memorable performances in the cathedrals of Salisbury, Lincoln and Guildford. Backhouse has also worked with a number of the UK's other leading choirs, including the BBC Singers, the London Symphony Chorus, the Philharmonia Chorus and the Brighton Festival Chorus.

[www.jeremybackhouse.com](http://www.jeremybackhouse.com)

## Vasari Singers

**Soprano:** Sarah Cumbers, Siân Dallas, Harriet Gritton (solo <sup>13</sup>), Lizzie Isherwood, Elizabeth Limb (solo <sup>11</sup>, solo <sup>14</sup> and semi-chorus <sup>18</sup>), Rosalind Newis (semi-chorus <sup>18</sup>), Rachel Robinson (semi-chorus <sup>18</sup>), Julia Smith, Jocelyn Somerville (solo <sup>3</sup>), Jess Stansfield, Laura Stephenson, Susan Waton (solo <sup>3</sup>)

**Alto:** Elizabeth Atkinson, Alison Benton, Alex Brougham, Yvonne Connell, Julia Field, Stephanie May (semi-chorus <sup>18</sup>), Sarah Mistry (semi-chorus <sup>18</sup>), Julia Ridout (semi-chorus <sup>18</sup>)

**Tenor:** Daniel Burges, Roger Carpenter, Giles Gabriel, Andrew Isherwood, David Jackson, Paul Robertson (solo <sup>4</sup>), Jonathan Scott, Julian Washington

**Bass:** Imants Auziņš, Jeremy Brown, James Cross, Malcolm Field, John Hunt, Keith Long, Paul Newis, Richard Semmens (solo <sup>4</sup>)

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## Vasari Singers



*Heaven full of stars* has been released in 2020 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Vasari Singers, which is among the leading chamber choirs in Britain. Under the direction of its founder conductor Jeremy Backhouse, Vasari Singers performs a wide range of repertoire from Renaissance to contemporary. The choir regularly sings at major concert venues and other locations in London and elsewhere, including abroad, having enjoyed tours to Spain, Italy and the Baltic states in recent years. Cathedral residencies are an important part of the choir's year, and the ensemble is frequently heard on Classic FM and BBC Radio 3. The choir's extensive discography includes a large collection of premiere recordings, many of which are of works commissioned by Vasari Singers, as well as two collections of Christmas music. Many of the choir's recordings have received high acclaim, achieving chart successes and similar recommendations. Their previous recording in 2017 of Rachmaninov's *All-night vigil* was critically acclaimed by *MusicWeb International*, received a four star review in *The Guardian* and a five star review in *Choir & Organ* magazine.

[www.vasarisingers.org](http://www.vasarisingers.org)

Contemporary sacred choral music has been central to the repertoire of Vasari Singers throughout its existence, and to mark its 40th anniversary it has selected a sequence of anthems, mostly with star-based themes, the vast majority of which are by living composers. The rich variety to be heard reflects the choir's commitment to the genre, whether in the ecstasy of Ēriks Ešenvalds, the serenity of Jonathan Dove, the shimmering harmonies of Eric Whitacre, or the ethereal beauties of Paul Mealor.

## HEAVEN FULL OF STARS

- |  |             |   |              |
|--|-------------|---|--------------|
| <b>1 Ēriks Ešenvalds: Stars</b>        | <b>4:46</b> | <b>9 Will Todd:</b>                     |              |
|  |             | <b>Christ is the Morning Star</b>       | <b>5:03</b>  |
| <b>2 Jonathan Dove: Seek him</b>       |             | <b>10 John Rutter: For the beauty</b>   |              |
| <b>that maketh the seven stars</b>     | <b>6:31</b> | <b>of the earth</b>                     | <b>4:04</b>  |
| <b>3 Ešenvalds: O salutaris hostia</b> | <b>3:31</b> | <b>11 Paul Mealor: Ave maris stella</b> | <b>4:05</b>  |
| <b>4 Patrick Gowers: Viri Galilæi</b>  | <b>7:54</b> | <b>12 Judith Weir:</b>                  |              |
| <b>5 Philip Stopford: Ave Maria</b>    | <b>3:59</b> | <b>Like to the falling of a star</b>    | <b>3:18</b>  |
| <b>6 Cecilia McDowall: Aurea luce</b>  | <b>5:57</b> | <b>13 Eric Whitacre: Lux aurumque</b>   | <b>3:22</b>  |
| <b>7 Rihards Dubra: O crux ave</b>     | <b>2:19</b> | <b>14 Gabriel Jackson:</b>              |              |
|  |             | <b>Creator of the stars of night</b>    | <b>4:33</b>  |
| <b>8 Roxanna Panufnik:</b>             |             | <b>15–18 Bob Chilcott:</b>              |              |
| <b>Deus est caritas</b>                | <b>4:10</b> | <b>Salisbury Motets</b>                 | <b>16:41</b> |

**Martin Ford, Organ** **2 4–6 8–10 12 14 15 17**

**Muriel Daniels, Cello** **17** • **Sarah Mistry, Bell** **17**

**Vasari Singers • Jeremy Backhouse**



A detailed track list and publishers' details can be found inside the booklet. The sung texts and translations are included in the booklet, and may also be accessed at [www.naxos.com/libretti/574179.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/574179.htm)

The tuned wine glasses on **1** are played by Vasari Singers.

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