



Francis POTT Christus

Improvisation on Adeste, Fideles Schmücke dich, O liebe Seele • Surrexit Hodie

Tom Winpenny, Organ

Francis Pott (b. 1957)

Christus

Christus (1986–1990) owes little to the French organ symphony tradition. Its concern with motivic unity and evolving tonality arises mainly from interest in the (orchestral) symphonic methods of the Danish composer Carl Nielsen, while certain harmonic habits relate more specifically to his Fourth and Fifth Symphonies. Above all, Christus is an exercise in cyclical integration.

Respectively, the five movements trace the Coming of Christ; Gethsemane; Via Crucis/Golgotha/the Deposition: the Tomb: and, finally, Resurrection portrayed not as victory already attained, but as a vast struggle towards ultimate triumph. A narrative dimension applies principally to the central three movements. The first four notes of the work (D-E-C sharp-F) articulate a progression which both dictates an overarching tonal cycle and becomes a continual motivic presence. The first movement responds to this motif by ultimately reaching the tonal centre F (the motif's fourth note). The second movement, opening with the motif transposed to start on F duly ends on A flat Beneated application of this principle brings about a fresh start from D at the outset of the finale. However, this movement eventually breaks the cycle by distorting the motif to D-E-C natural-F sharp. C is then enharmonically absorbed as a sharpened fourth of the transposed Lydian mode and the work ends in F sharp major.

The first movement, Logos [λογος], evolves into a listless fugato after a strict exposition, evoking a world as yet devoid of any affirmative or elevating impulse. After a brief climax a succession of ideas is heard. The mood becomes restlessly expectant and the tempo accelerates. After the first substantial climax in the Symphony comes an extended Allegro. Its rhythms inhabit a consciously middle ground between medieval and modern practices, while the intermittent presence of a pedal C sharp undermines an ostensible D tonality. Eventually a further climax occurs, temporarily consolidating C sharp. After a more spacious passage, a chorale theme is heard for the first time, ornamented by fragmentary patterns beneath.

This is destined for increasing significance throughout the work as a whole, assuming many harmonic guises and ultimately crowning the *Resurrectio* finale.

An extended free development follows. In due course the Allegro is recapitulated, but rising tension is dissipated by a remote chordal statement of the chorale (which shows a tendency to remain open-ended until its apotheosis near the work's conclusion). The resumed Allegro steadily escalates through successive restatements of the 'motto' four-note theme, beginning in the depths with an unceremonious interruption and rising inexorably towards the final bars. Fitfully dramatic and beset by sudden contrasts, the movement seeks to convey some impression of the Holy Spirit contending with a resistant force. Its peroration remains equivocal, as if not yet free from the shadow of the opening fugato.

Gethsemane begins with the motto theme, soon introducing a very slow procession of chords. These are in effect a non-vocal 'setting' of the word 'slowly' in the quoted text by Thomas Merton, whose vision depicts Christ as a spectral visitant embodying all the despair of human suffering. Eventually motivic counterpoint asserts itself in a transient chorale prelude (the chorale being sounded by the pedals). The chordal material returns, now silent on the first beat of each bar to allow a pedal development of the four-note motif to show through. An anguished climax intervenes suddenly, subsiding at length until the chordal texture is regained. The music becomes both more meekly accepting and more otherworldly thereafter, though perhaps not before Merton's vision has exposed the ineluctable humanity of Christ's frailty and defeat: that hairsbreadth of salvation which Christian perception of the resurrection as fait accompli threatens to obscure.

Via Crucis is an exercise in contraction. Its Passacaglia 'ground' sounds five times beginning on A flat, then four on A natural, three on B flat, two on B natural and one on C – the furthest point in the chromatic scale from ultimate 'resurrected' F sharp. Meanwhile, the

fewer bars, as if unsteady beneath hostile buffeting. The flow of ancillary counterpoint progressively features a descending chromatic motif from the previous movement, as well as the chorale outline and ironic mimicry of the 'ground' notes, whose final reiteration (now reduced almost beyond coherence) ignites a jagged scherzo. At its height three abruptly recessed quiet passages occur, marking the arrival at Golgotha and each followed by related and dissonant outbursts symbolising the hammered nails. The intention is to suggest the gulf separating extremities of physical torment from the soul's silent struggle within. The third outburst escalates towards the central climax of the Symphony, headed 'CRUCIFIXUS' in the published score and bearing words from Revelation: Every eve shall see Him. and they also which pierced him. This insistent climax finally collapses. Unward harmonic progressions offer an unashamedly literal suggestion of suffering ended and a winging of the spirit out of this world into another (influenced by Paul Nash's watercolour. The Soul Visiting the Mansions of the Dead). The chorale returns, simply harmonised in quasi-Renaissance fashion

Viaticum provides extended repose between the inexorable treadmill of the third movement and the explosive opening of the last. Its title, meaning 'wages for a journey', symbolically denotes prayers attending the departure of a soul from this world into the next. At first the music makes as if to recapitulate the work's opening in a new key, thereby evoking a spiritual regression to that world before Christ. This is short-lived, and, after a static chordal passage (balancing that of Gethsemane), a lengthy movement evolves in the time signature of 5/4, its principal melodic idea being a free inversion of the chorale's later stages. (This recurs momentously, late in the finale, where it signifies satanic opposition to the true chorale's determined upward progress.)

Viaticum evokes a world locked in sleep or some deep midwinter of the spirit. Its rhythmic tread consciously resembles the tenor solo in the Agnus Dei of Britten's War Requiem. The music remains confined to modest dynamic levels and pursues its course to the prescribed

ground itself begins to distort rhythmically and to unfold in fewer bars, as if unsteady beneath hostile buffeting. The flow of ancillary counterpoint progressively features a entombed stillness.

Resurrectio attempts formal balance with Logos while articulating a great struggle toward the light. It begins with thunderous declamation of the motto theme and a stormy cadenza-like introduction which comes to rest on a chord of F sharp (anticipating but not forestalling the work's peroration). The movement 'proper' then embarks from the tonal point E and gives prominence to a new, irregular motif. Logos is recalled rhythmically. The chorale reappears, leading to free development of itself and the motto theme. A chromatic outline, first heard in Gethsemane, appears in inversion, climbing with each recurrence. A moto perpetuo of detached chordal guavers initiates an immense cumulative process, embracing progressive jaggedness of rhythm and the steady return of earlier toccata figuration. The chorale is declaimed first by the manuals over rapid chordal patterns and then, in augmentation and in octaves, by the pedals, Fleeting references to the tonal cycle of all five movements are heard. The eventual climax is as massive as that of Golaotha

Descent from this summit induces a semblance of calm. References to the opening of Logos lead to a passage where the sustained chords of Gethsemane become fused to phrases from the work's opening and from the chorale, embellished by triplet quaver figuration. The music becomes hesitant: the first sign of yet greater struggles ahead. From uncertain beginnings a semiguaver line emerges. This becomes the exposition of a fugue, but a distorted one and an essay in elusive tonality. Its entries are nitched not at tonic and dominant but at the distance of an augmented fourth ('tritone'). The device therefore relates to the work's tonal structure. since the diminished chord comprising each movement's starting pitch consists also of interlocking tritones. Such a modal form was shunned in early music, since it supplanted the conventional 'perfect' interval between first and fifth note, thus running counter to the established harmonic order of things - hence also to the sophisticated divine providence as a pattern mystically and mathematically echoed in music. Eventually the fugue moves unobtrusively from the time signature of 4/4 to 7/8, without breaking its semiguaver flow. A fugal stretto for three voices is succeeded by the rare, eccentric device known as cancrizans. Beloved of Baroque contrapuntists, this earns its historical name through a bizarrely approximate likening to sideways ('crabwise') motion, whereas actually a melodic strand (in this case, ten bars long) is heard simultaneously forwards and backwards without concession to pitch or rhythm. Scholes observed in the Oxford Companion to Music that a cancrizans is a futile conceit, the listener being unequipped to perceive it happening. That in itself was apt, since the fugue itself loses its way shortly thereafter and expires on a perplexed, unresolved chord, much as if will and rational thought had shied back in the face of some onslaught yet to come. To those familiar with Nielsen's Symphony No. 5 the parallel will be obvious.

An ironic outburst now launches a grotesque parody of the music following the introduction to Resurrectio. Of what follows, 'War in Heaven' (Revelation) best summarises the intention. A showdown between the affirmative and the destructive is implied through the simple expedients of upward or downward motivic direction and greater or lesser dissonance. The rhythm from the opening of the main part of the movement reaches a furious outburst marked *gridando* ('screeching') before the choral blossoms suddenly forth in C major. Its key indicates the distortion by which the work's tonal spiral will be broken, anticipating this by embracing both C and F sharp in its opening phrase. Reference to the central climax of the work (in Golgotha) shows that C and F sharp were in collision even there, at the work's opposite pole, with no resolution vet in sight.

The final change of the four-note motto theme (emphasised by juxtaposition of both its forms) propels the music into F sharp, now affirmed through rhapsodic treatment of the chorale. The precedent of all four preceding movements is followed, in that a cadential formula based upon a fragment of the chorale heralds the music's end. A final reference to the chorale intervenes

before sudden silence, then a greatly prolonged final chord.

Although Christus traces the Christian story from nativity through to death and resurrection, this was always because those are reference points to be recognised by anyone living through some personal existential crisis, not because they speak exclusively to the convinced Christian. The work's tonal cycle is such that it traverses a kind of 'dark side of the moon' in its middle stages, before breaking out of a spiral which could have continued forever, without intervention. In personal terms there was no existential crisis as such: specifically. Christus stands as a memorial to my father, who had died of pancreatic cancer in 1983 at the age of 59. It ramified slowly for three years before I began it, by which time its more universal resonances had asserted themselves as things to be explored. By pure accident, when I was already working on the central movements, the first Iraq war was underway and the tanks were rolling into Kuwait. I already had the idea that the vast final movement should reach a central climax which, though cataclysmic, failed to slav the beast and resolve conflict. Instead, initially beatific calm would gradually yield to deepening unease, from which would emerge the final showdown. In the event. later performances of Christus coincided with a second Iraq war: the tanks were back and the horror was recurring. This lent Resurrectio a certain prophetic dimension which is actually illusory: it is simply the case that if a composer addresses man's inhumanity to man. he or she will never he far wide of the mark

Surrexit Hodie, a recessional voluntary for Easter Sunday, was commissioned in 2019 by Marko Sever, then Organ Scholar at St Albans Cathedral. Funding was generously provided by the eminent tenor, Rogers Covey-Crump (resident in St Albans and a member of the Cathedral's congregation).

The work begins with a broad introduction, from which fragments of the germinal plainchant O Filli et Fillae begin to emerge. These lead into a jig-like toccata in which the rising initial three notes of the chant are given especial prominence. A secondary episode presents a lengthier segment of O Filli et Fillae, first as a lyrical solo and then canonically between the hands. Discursive

development leads into a recapitulation of the toccata 'proper', its escalation eventually accommodating part of the plainsong in the pedal line, before the material of the work's introduction reappears, now subsumed into the toccata momentum. An extended canonic apotheosis of the plainchant between manuals and pedals ensues, followed by a declamatory statement by reeds of the chant's latter half and a headlong coda. Having begun in the tonality of E, with austere open fifths evoking mediaeval organum style, the work closes on a triumphantly unequivocal chord of E maior.

The Improvisation on Adesté, Fideles was commissioned jointly by Christopher Jonas and the Eric Thompson Charitable Trust for Organists and Organ Music, as a recessional voluntary for the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols broadcast from the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge, in December 2005. It was written for and played by Tom Winpenny, at that time Senior Organ Scholar at King's.

The Improvisation presents various motivic fragments of the Adeste melody while disquising them through rhythmic alteration, as at the very start, where the first four notes of the tune are imitatively declaimed as catalyst for a broad introduction (longer stretches are obliquely apparent too, but much altered harmonically and tonally). When the piece gets fully underway as a sort of toccata based on jig-like rhythms, the tune's opening remains embedded within the flow of continuous semiguavers. After a guieter secondary presentation of the theme, snatches of it are subjected to canonic exploration. including inversions of its original content, before the music resumes its former energy in a brief fugato. A discursive development follows, in which fragments of the original tune's chorus can be intermittently heard as iaggedly dancing chordal rhythms.

Eventually the entire tune bursts forth in canon between the uppermost 'voice' and the pedals, a device heavily dependent upon the harmonic language used to lend the melody a modified tonal context. After this the earlier fugato passage is balanced and rounded off by a thunderous pedal entry of its subject, and the material of the work's opening bars recurs in modified guise, fanning out first in descending and then in ascending form. In its closing stages the piece settles upon modally-inflected D major as its definitive destination: one of several possibilities implicit in the music's very opening bar.

The manuscript of J.S. Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* ('Little Organ Book') contains 118 spaces where the composer penned only a title, indicating his intentions, but lived on without ever completing the chorale prelude in question. Curated by the organist William Whitehead, the recent *Orgelbüchlein Project* enlisted the participation of living composers, each producing one chorale prelude to fill the gaps.

The chorale prelude on Schmücke dich. O liebe Seele was privately commissioned for the Project by the organist Andrew Prior, Bather than exposing the theme too obviously at the outset, this gently contemplative piece first views it upside-down, with its rhythmic content changed. Patterns arising from this procedure then extend to form a freely contrapuntal dialogue, beneath which the chorale theme in its true form enters in due course, played on the pedals. When the chorale runs out, it is heard again on manuals alone still in its definitive form and now at the ton of the texture. The music ends as peacefully as it began. Written in 2013, this little movement is inscribed to the memory of a lifelong friend, Jon Leyne, sometime BBC 'anchor' news reporter at the United Nations and latterly its correspondent in Tehran and Cairo, whose death in that year from a malignant brain tumour left a lasting void.

Francis Pott

Christus

Superscriptions to separate movements

2 Ι. λογος (Logos)

What is here but a heap of desolations, ...a mass of miseries and silence, footsteps of innumerable sufferings...

Thomas Traherne (c.1636–1674)
from Centuries of Meditations, 1.89

And the light shineth in darkness...

John 1.5

Behold, I send my messenger before thy face...

Luke 7.27 / Matthew 1.2

Hereafter shall ye see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man...

John 1.51

3 II. Gethsemane

Slowly slowly Comes Christ through the garden Speaking to the sacred trees Their branches bear his light Without harm

Slowly slowly Comes Christ through the ruins Seeking the lost disciple

Slowly slowly Christ rises on the cornfields The disciple Turns in sleep The disciple will awaken When he knows history But slowly slowly The Lord of History Weeps into the fire.

Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

from 'Cables to the Ace': 80 by Thomas Merton, from *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, copyright © 1968 by The Abbey of Gethsemani. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

4 III. Via Crucis

Passacaglia

I am the great sun, but you do not see me, I am your husband, but you turn away. I am the captive, but you do not free me, I am the captain you will not obey.

I am the truth, but you will not believe me, I am the city where you will not stay, I am your wife, your child, but you will leave me, I am that God to whom you will not pray.

I am your counsel, but you do not hear me, I am the lover whom you will betray, I am the victor, but you do not cheer me, I am the holy dove whom you will slay.

I am your life, but if you will not name me, Seal up your soul with tears, and never blame me.

Charles Causley (1917–2003)
'I am the Great Sun' from *Collected Poems 1951–2000* by Charles Causley, published by Macmillan.

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Scherzo / Golgotha

At the cry of the first bird They began to crucify thee O swan. Never shall lament cease because of that. It was like the parting of day from night.

The Speckled Book (Irish, 12th century), translated by Howard Mumford Jones (1892–1980)

from The Romanesque Lyric: Studies in its background and development from Petronius to the Cambridge Songs, 50-1050 by Philip Schuyler Allen with translation by Howard Mumford Jones. © 1928 University of North Carolina Press.

Every eye shall see him, And they also which pierced him.

Revelation 1.7

Their faces shall be as flames.

Isaiah 13.8

5 IV. Viaticum

... La Noche sosegada En par de los levantes de la aurora, La Musica callada, La soledad Sonora...

... The still night before the coming of the dawn, The voiceless music, The audible solitude...

> St John of the Cross (1542–1591) Spiritual Canticle of the Soul, Stanza XV

... Acaba, Señor; Al que has de enviar envía... Y ábrase ya la tierra Que espinas nos producia...

... Finish now your work, O God; Send now your chosen one... ... And rend the earth That bore for us such thorns...

St John of the Cross from Romance on the Gospel text 'In principio erat Verbum'

Tomorrow weeps in a blind cage Terror will rage apart Before chains break to a hammer flame And love unbolts the dark...

Dylan Thomas (1914–1953)
from 'Poem on his Birthday' from *The Poems of Dylan Thomas*, published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
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6 V. Resurrectio

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, Before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come...

Scriptural quotations from King James Bible

St John of the Cross translations by Francis Pott

The Organ of St Albans Cathedral

Harrison & Harrison, Durham, UK, 1962

Restored and rebuilt by Harrison & Harrison, 2007-09

The Cathedral Organ was built in 1962 to a design by Peter Hurford (the Cathedral's then Master of the Music) and Ralph Downes. The design of the instrument was revolutionary, being the first organ in a British cathedral to be voiced and built on neo-classical lines. Hurford, who was already gaining international acclaim as a concert organist, was intent on realising a versatile and cohesive instrument which would serve with integrity both the major schools of organ repertoire and the Cathedral's choral services.



The instrument is based on the principles of open-foot voicing and relatively low wind-pressures that Downes had employed in his work on the landmark organ for the Royal Festival Hall, London in the 1950s. Downes was closely involved with the scaling and voicing of the pipes, and he considered spatial separation of all divisions, with sufficiently wide scaling of wide-open flutes, important for the projection of sound. Around one third of the pipework of the previous instrument was reused, but was completely re-voiced, John Oldrid Scott's 1908 cases were retained: the pipework of the Swell and Great sits in north and south cases respectively. The pedal ranks are at floor level in the organ loft in both cases, and a new Positive case was designed by Cecil Brown to house the Choir division.

The instrument has for almost 60 years been the centrepiece of the St Albans International Organ Festival, founded by Hurford in 1963. In 2007-09 the organ was comprehensively refurbished by Harrison & Harrison of Durham (the original builders).

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

Great Organ Pedal Organ Swell Organ Nave Organ (prepared for) 16' Principal 32' Sub Bass Open Diapason 16 Bourdon Rohr Flute 16' Bourdon Principal Principal Rohr Flute 8' Principal 16' Major Bass 8' Viola 8' Diapason 16' Bourdon 8' Celeste 4' Octave Spitzflute 103/3' Quint (tenor c) Spitzflute Stopped Diapason Super Octave 8' Octave Principal Gedackt Open Flute Mixture IV Octave 8' Stopped Flute 23/3 Pedal Sub Bass 51/3' Nazard Nazard 23/3 Quint Choral Bass 2' Octave Super Octave 2' Open Flute Nave on Great 2 Gemshorn 2' Blockflute Mixture IV-VI 13/5 Tierce Nave on Solo Mixture IV-VI 32 Fagotto Mixture III 16' Bass Trumpet Bombardon Cimbel III Combination couplers 8' 16' Corno di Bassetto Trumpet 16 Bass Trumpet Clarion (Great) Hautboy Great and Pedal Grand Cornet V 16' Vox Humana Combinations Coupled Fagotto 8 (from 32') Trumpet Generals on Toe Pistons Choir to Great 8 Tromba Clarion Balanced Swell Pedal Swell to Great Shawm Solo to Great Tremulant (mechanical) Adjustable Choir Organ Choir to Pedal Octave Choir Organ Great to Pedal Sub Octave shutters (rotary dial) Swell to Pedal Unison Off 16' Quintaton Solo to Pedal The manual compass is Open Diapason Solo Organ CC-a, 58 notes; the Gedacktpommer pedalboard compass is Flauto Traverso Corno di Bassetto CCC-G, 32 notes Octave (Swell) Rohr Flute Grand Cornet V Wald Flute (Great) 11/3 Fanfare Trumpet Larigot Sesquialtera II Cimbelstern Mixture IV (6 bells) Cromorne

Octave

Unison off

Great Reeds on Solo

8'

8'

4'

4

4'

4'

8'

Tremulant

Unison off Swell to Choir Solo to Choir

Octave

Tom Winpenny



Tom Winpenny is Assistant Master of the Music at St Albans Cathedral, where he accompanies the daily choral services and directs the Cathedral Girls Choir. Previously, he served as suborganist at St Paul's Cathedral, London. He currently serves as a trustee of the Royal College of Organists. Winpenny has broadcast frequently on BBC radio and featured on American Public Media's Pipedreams. He was an organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge, twice accompanying A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. As a soloist, he has performed internationally, with recent engagements including recitals at Västerås Cathedral, Sweden, Trinity Cathedral, Phoenix, USA and Hildesheim Cathedral, Germany. His wideranging discography includes music by Mozart, Liszt, McCabe, Joubert and Francis Grier. For Naxos, his solo recordings include Messiaen's La Nativité du Seigneur (8.573332) and L'Ascension

(8.573471), and music by Bingham (8.572687 and 8.574251) and Williamson (8.571375-76). Winpenny also directs St Albans Cathedral Girls Choir in recordings of music by Mendelssohn (8.572836), Mathias (8.573523) and Michael Haydn (8.574163).

Francis Pott



Francis Pott began his musical life as a chorister at New College, Oxford. He held Open Music Scholarships at Winchester College and then at Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he studied composition with Robin Holloway and Hugh Wood while pursuing piano studies privately in London with Hamish Milne. Since 2007 he has been Professor of Composition at London College of Music, University of West London. He is married, has adult children and lives just outside Winchester. Pott's music has been performed and broadcast in over 40 countries, widely published and extensively recorded. Winner of four national and two international composition awards, in 1997 he received First Prize in the piano solo section of the Prokofiev Composing Competition, Moscow. He is currently orchestrating a violin concerto and working on the early stages of a symphony. In 2021 he was awarded the Medal of the Royal College of Organists for distinguished achievement in the fields of organ and sacred choral composition. www.francispott.com

Acclaimed for his sacred choral and organ works, Francis Pott was recognised in 2021 with the Medal of the Royal College of Organists, its highest award. Regarded as an Everest of the organ repertoire, *Christus* is a Passion symphony that traces this dramatic Biblical narrative through evolving tonality, portraying Christ's vast struggle through betrayal and crucifixion towards ultimate triumph. *Christus* here enjoys its first studio recording, made in the presence of the composer. Included also are premieres of *Surrexit Hodie* (a toccata for Easter Sunday) and a commemorative chorale prelude, *Schmücke dich*, *O liebe Seele*.

Francis POTT (b. 1957)

Christus

1 Improvisation on Adeste, Fideles (2005)	5:53
Christus – Passion symphony for organ (1986–1990)	
2 I. Logos	32:41
3 II. Gethsemane	17:11
4 III. Passacaglia (Via Crucis) – Scherzo – Golgotha	16:20
5 IV. Viaticum	15:50
6 V. Resurrectio	38:26
7 Schmücke dich, O liebe Seele (2013)*	6:02
8 Surrexit Hodie (Fantasia-Toccata sopra 'O Filii et Filiae') (2019)*	8:28

*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Tom Winpenny, Organ

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