

THIS CHURCH

by Michael Finnissy



METIER

MICHAEL FINNISSY This Church

This piece was written (2001-3) to celebrate the 900th anniversary of Saint Mary de Haura (New Shoreham), a town-centre church on the coast of Sussex. This church, not merely the building but the evolving community around it, is – I think – typical of countless others across the whole of England. Its story, although specific, seems also to exemplify the history of Christianity in this country from Norman times to the present.

The work is divided into four sections and contains four overlapping (or intercut) cyclical strands of music, defined by vocal resource. In order of appearance, cycle 1 is for distant female voice(s), cycle 2 for solo baritone, cycle 3 for the two speaking voices, and cycle 4 for the choir. The cycles make different progressions through the piece. 1 (the shortest) makes two stylistically contrasted appearances in the opening section, and then only reappears briefly in part two. 2 (the longest) runs throughout, shuttling between linking 'narrative' and contemplative and closed-form 'aria'. The third and fourth cycles do not feature at all in the opening section. Cycle 3 then opens the second and third parts of the work in a virtually identical fashion, and then become more integrated into the 'flow' of the final section. Cycle 4 only contains closed-form songs or hymns, and its appearances are arranged symmetrically: a song with handbells, one with pizzicato 'cello, and then a hymn – twice in the course of the piece.

Cycle 1 also initiates the fundamental musical material. Not only pitches – a descending fifth being most prominent, but two paradigms of Western European sacred music: Catholic plainchant (modal, ornate, Mediterranean) and Lutheran chorale and counterpoint (sequential and imitative, chromatic, introverted in character). The opening notes (A-D-D-F -G) eventually return in the identical 'tonality' for the final hymn, having been variously explored and permuted in the remainder of the work (effectively a set of extended variations).

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Part One

(a) Mezzo-Soprano solo and Choir:

O clarissima Mater, sanctae medicinae
Tu unguenta per sanctum Filium tuum
Infudisti in plangentia vulnera mortis
Ora pro nobis, Maria.

(b) Baritone solo:

This Church, this church Philip de Braiosa did with forethought concede to the monks of Saint
Florent: Ierosolimis autem praedictus Philippus rediens ecclesiam sanctae Mariae de Haura
Soraham, quia monachorum praedictorum exstitit juris.

(c) This church, flooded with the light of God,
one light extending over all the globe,
and the unity of the body is not broken,
there is but one head, one source,
one mother, - of her womb we are born,
by her milk we are nourished,
and we are quickened from her breath.

(d) Choir:

Maria macht ihr Innerstes der Seelen
Durch Dank und Ruhmen kund;
Sie fanget bei sich an,

(e) Baritone solo:

All godly ceremonyes & good usys were taken out of this Church
In the second yer of Kyng Edward the syxt, the tyme of Scysme
When this Realm was devyded from the Catholic Church.
When cruell tiranntes dyd cast downe all crosses.
When nather breade nor watter was sanctified
Or distributte emonge Christian people on Sondays,
Butt clerely omittide as thinges tendinge to idolatrie.
When also the pixes hangynge over th' altters (wherin was remanyng Christ blesside bodie under
forme of breade) were dispytfully cast away as thinges most abominable.
When certeine persons take away, utterly extinct and destroy all ymages of Jhesus, all shrines, all
tables, candlesticks, ryth Coppes and vestmentes, paintings and all other monuments in glass
windows of feigned miracles and superstition, so there remain no memory of them.
When the old Bookes in the Latyn tonge and all other kynds of 'trashe and tromperie' of papistical
servyce be defaced and abolished.
When we must repose our trust in no other works devised by men's phantasies beside Scripture.
When ther be no candles but onlie the light that commonly goeth across the church.
When we should not breache the most godly lawes and holosome ordinances of this realme, to the
great daunger of our owne sowles and the deceaving and snarring of the soules of the simple.
When it is safer to do in religion as most do.

Part Two

(a) Speaking Voices:

On Christmas day, 1643, we came to Shoareham. About 11 a clocke Rolfe shott off a carabine and withal his thumbe. The enemy attempted Bramber bridge, and our Dragones welcomed them with drakes and musketts, sending some eight or nine men to hell, one of Captain Evermden's men to heaven, and one trooper to Arundel castle prisoner.

New Shoreham is a very ancient Boro, having a good Harbor for vessels of considerable Burthen. The Haven's mouth is a very dry barr upon the ebbs of Spring tydes, and the out-sea in foul weather throws up heaps of beach in the manner of small islands; and whether you come in or goe out, you meet with great difficulty and hazard.

This yeare 1646 was a total neglect of Registring in this parish, but such as could be certified by mee, Daniel Harcourt, were entered.

Saint Mary's is much out of repair. The churchyard not well fenced. The parish deserted by the appointed clergy for several months. No man would consider taking the vicarage for naked profit. The Bishop of Chichester complains of the "heathens of Shoreham".

By October 14th, 1686, the passage into the body of the church was utterly ruinate – the floor of the steeple decayed.

(b) Baritone solo:

Wednesday November the 24th, 1703, was a calm, fine day, till above 4 o'clock, when it began to be cloudy, and the wind rose of a sudden. The tempest began here much about 1 o'clock in the morning of the 27th. The violence of the wind stript a great many houses. The air was seen full of meteors and vaporous fires. The market house, an antient and very strong building, was blown flat to the ground, and all the town shatter'd. In the country the grass was so salt that the sheep would not feed till hunger compelled them, and afterwards drank like fishes. Knobs of congealed salt were found on the hedges and twigs of trees. December the 2nd was still very tempestuous all the morning, at 1 o'clock the storm abated, the sky cleared and by 4 o'clock there was not a breath of wind.

(c) Choir:

At this church, on June the 6th 1714, the Parishoners unanimously agreed to the Rules concerning the Charity School. First that the schoolmaster shall be a person of a sober life and conversation and well grounded in the principles and disciplines of the established Church of England and constantly attend the duties thereof, teaching and instructing 20 or 30 Children of the parish. And that he shall teach his schollers the true spelling of words and distinction of syllables with the points and stops. And to write a legible hand with the grounds of Arithmetick. And bring the children that shall be under his care, to Church, twice every Lords day and as often in the weekdays as there shall be Divine Service performed. And shall teach them to behave themselves with all reverence and Devotion while they are in the house of God, and to have their Bibles and Common Prayer books bound together for their better instructions in the duty of divine Service. The master shall teach his schollers to pray att home when they go to bed and when they rise up.

Baritone solo:

At a vestry held at the usual place on the 4th day of February in the year 1721 it was ordered by the general consent of the parishoners there met together that the present churchwardens should prosecute Mister Rice Williams, minister of the said parish, for misdemeanours –

Choir:

For keeping the parishoners out of the school house, being the place of their usual assembling about parish business.

For locking up and denying the key of the room where the books of parish matters lay.

For refusing the church door key and key of the room for the book to enter surveyors of the highways.

For refusing the church and belfry keys that the sexton may look after the clock.

For refusing the Register book although the chest hath three locks and keys.

Baritone solo:

I do protest against this combination for being false.

(d) Mezzo-Soprano solo:

Maria fanget bei sich an,

Des Heilands Wunder erzählen,

Was er an ihr als Magd getan.

(e) Baritone solo:

In this church I have heard exceeding great and precious promises - even that we should partake of the divine nature.

Keep the Commandments, believe, hope, love; follow after these tempers till death, by walking as Christ walked.

In 1730 I began visiting the prisons, assisting the poor and sick in town, and doing what other good I could by my presence or my little fortune to the bodies and souls of all men.

I omitted no sort of self-denial. I diligently strove against all sin.

I omitted no occasion for doing good. And for that reason suffered evil.

And all this I knew to be nothing unless it was directed toward inward holiness.

Now, in truth, the 'union with God' thus pursued, was really my own righteousness than any under another name. I have a fair summer religion. I have been tossed by various winds of doctrine. I can believe while no danger is near, but in a storm I think 'What if the Gospel be not true?'

I went to America to convert the Indians, but who shall convert ME? Who will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief?

Lord, save me: by such humility as may fill my heart from this hour for ever.

Save me: by such a faith as implies peace in life and in death.

Save me: by such a recollection as may cry to thee every moment, especially when all is calm.

Give me faith, or I die.

Part Three

(a) Speaking Voices:

In this church we do not find the heavy features and coarse workmanship of the earlier Norman structures, as exemplified in Chichester Cathedral, and the neighbouring Church at Bramber; but that it exhibits the careful finish and increasing delicacy which characterised the later works of the Period. It would be a matter of some interest to ascertain whether the foundation walls of the original building still exist below the surface of the earth outside, and the floor within.

It is not indeed uninteresting to observe how faithfully the condition of the Church appears at all times to have reflected the fortunes of the Port; nor can its magnificent aspect on the completion of the Choir in the commencement of the Thirteenth Century, when the prosperity of the latter had reached its climax, have been less remarkable, as illustrating this circumstance, than its ruinous condition in later times.

There are few Ecclesiastical buildings in the kingdom of which the Documentary History is so scanty and uninteresting.

This Church must formerly have been one of the most important, and is still, in its mutilated condition, one of the most remarkable buildings in the district.

(b) Baritone solo:

This church, full in the eye of the cynical, discomfortable moon staring from the fading sky.

(c) Choir:

When we turn inward and seek the waters of life within our own soul we have been truly blessed by God.

(d) Baritone solo:

This church strong as time, and as faith sublime, - clothed round with shadows of hopes and fears,
Nights and morrows, and joys and sorrows, alive with passion of prayers and tears.
This church - its tower set square to the storms of air and change of season that glooms and glows,
Bright with riches and radiant niches and pillars smooth as a straight stem grows.
Aisle and nave that the whelming wave of time has not touched or neared,
Arch and vault, by hands of craftsmen we know not reared.
Time beheld them,
And Time was quelled; and change passed by them as one that feared.
Time, whose breath is their birth and death, folds here his pinions and and bows his head.

(e) Choir:

To Thy Church the pattern give, show how true believers live.
Free from anger and from pride.
Let us thus in God abide.

Part Four

(a) Baritone solo:

I want to tell you my few words, that to this church I send greetings from M-ponda's school.

That I was baptised Basil Edward, on All Saints' Day 1902, so also I rejoice.

That I have become engaged to a Christian girl, her name is Tabitha Amazame. I want you to send her a small bed, - not for myself.

That I am not happy because my mother is ill. Also my finger has cut itself a wound. That a crocodile has seized the people, - a woman with her small child has been taken, - for this we do not rejoice.

That from the Melanesian Mission, Mister De la Pryme has given me work at the table, as Padre Philipps did.

The work of the table is the same as that belonging to the English at Fort Johnston. Send to me quickly, - as we throw the football.

I am Basil Edward Basili.

(b) Speaking Voices:

September 1914. With a rapidity almost impossible to understand, war has broken out. In the terrible crisis which has arisen, the nation has been called to Prayer, that we may be saved from our enemies, and a true and lasting peace be vouchsafed to all the kingdoms of the world.

War in itself can never be other than an evil thing. In quietness and confidence shall be your strength. Deny yourself luxuries, pleasures and amusements. The more simply and economically we live, the greater will be our ability to give a helping hand.

Let us seek to be enlightened in our understanding and fortified in our courage, in facing the sacrifices we may yet have to make before our work is done. Do not let us, for one moment in the hour of rejoicing over daily victories, advances, liberations, - forget the awful cost - the sad and desolated homes of those who win those victories for us.

We have done all that could be done to preserve peace - first by disarming, but no other nation would follow, then by negotiation and appeals, but the pledges of peace have been ruthlessly broken. We have given way for the sake of peace, but this is only regarded as weakness. No one doubts that war is contrary to God's will and Christ's teaching, ruinous to human prosperity and happiness. Those who believe they are fighting for Christian civilisation, need to be careful lest they violate and forget the very principles for which they contend.

(c) Baritone solo:

As defence for the town, the wardens at this church were sent a small brown envelope, sealed with red wax, and marked -

(d) Choir:

SECRET. To be opened only in event of enemy attack or landing.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE: Fasten one corner of the triangle to the inside of the gas-mask, so that the triangle falls down in front of the haversack. In order to show to our own aircraft that one is British, hold out the two loose corners in front so pulling the triangle - of luminous citrus coloured cloth - taut in a horizontal position. This will prevent them from dive-bombing or machine-gunning you.

TO BE DESTROYED AFTER READING.

(e) Speaking Voice:

War supplies us with a moral directive which we must now supply for ourselves. Each of us can dedicate our private lives to the knowledge that we must live as citizens of a world that will either be united or dead. We think we have uncovered the last secrets of nature and our power for destruction has become absolute.

(f) Baritone solo:

This church is an icon of Christ's presence, a sign of Christ's love, a beacon of Christ's light. This church is where we were privileged to have received the retirement ministry of Bishop Ambrose Reeves after his expulsion from South Africa.

(g) Choir:

This church is a link to the past, present and future generations. This church is alive. This church is a constant in a changing world.
This church is full of friendly people.
This church is where Betty got married to George Bishop in 1954.
This church has the churchyard where I have found tranquility during my lunch breaks.
This church is where I've worshipped all my life (age 73).
This church is serenely sublime.
This church exudes a comforting sense of peace.
This church is where my mother, Betty Palmer helped with the flower arranging in the early seventies.
This church is where I want to be married.
This church is where, as Verger and choir member I happily spend a lot of my time.
This church holds so many secrets of the past, that even the flagstones seem to whisper their stories in the evening twilight, and the pillars link arms as the light dims.
This church is loved like a dear friend. This church is solid in an unstable world. This church is where my 'little boy' Robert sang in the choir.

(h) Teach me, my God and King,

In all things thee to see
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for thee.

A man that looks on glasse
On it may stay his eye
Or if he pleaseth through it passe
And then the heav'n espie.

All may of thee partake
Nothing can be so mean
Which with his tincture (for thy sake)
Will not grow bright and clean.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for lesse be told.

Textual Sources:

- 1a. From 'O clarissima mater' (in *Symphoniae harmoniae*) by S.Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179).
- 1b. From 'The Chartulary of the Priory of Saint Peter at Sele' (L.F.Salzman ed.1923) and other documents relating to S.Peter's (a cell of S.Florent) held at Magdalen College, Oxford (patrons of the living of S.Mary de Haura from 1459 to 1948, a gift of William Waynfleet).
- 1c. From 'De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate IV-VII' by Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus, Bishop of Carthage from 248-58.
- 1d. From the text to J.S.Bach BWV 147 (Nr.2) by Salomo Franck (1716).
- 1e. From Parliamentary Injunction 28 (1547) and contemporary documents by Robert Parkyn (parish priest of Adwick-le-Street, near Doncaster), the churchwardens of Stanford-in-the-Vale (Berkshire) and William Perkins (writing in c.1590).
- 2a. Letter from the Rev.John Coulton, chaplain to the parliamentary army (8th January 1643/4); Burr M/S 1698; 'Britannia Depicta, or Ogilby Improved' by John Owen (ed.) 1720; M.A.Dissertation (Courtauld Institute 1988) by Sally Woodcock (Ref.21); Letter from the Bishop of Chichester to Magdalen College (Woodcock op.cit Ref.18).
- 2b. From 'The Storm: Or, a Collection of the Most Remarkable Casualties & Disasters' by Daniel Defoe (1704).
- 2c. From the parish Vestry Books (1714 and 1721) held at the West Sussex County Records Office, Chichester, to whose staff many thanks are due for their interest, time and expertise.
- 2d. Salomo Franck (continuation of 1d. above).
- 2e. From the Journal (January-May 1738) of John Wesley (1703-91).
- 3a. 'The Architectural History of S.Mary's Church, New Shoreham' by Edmund Sharpe MA.FRIBA. Read before the Archeological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland on 16th July 1853.
- 3b. Altered from 'In Shoreham River...' by W.E.Henley (c.1888) with grateful thanks to Dennis L.Bird, also for 4a. below.
- 3c. From the Journals (1834-54) of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55).
- 3d. 'On the South Coast' (Astrophel and other poems c.1889-93) by Algernon Charles Swinburne.
- 3e. Methodist School Hymn Book No.268 by Charles Wesley (1707-1788).
- 4a. From letters and articles in 'Shoreham Parish Magazine' June (et seq.) 1903.
- 4b. Rev.Charles M.A. Tower (vicar of S.Mary's) writing in the Parish Magazine (No.297); George A. Cobbold (idem.October 1914); George R.I. (cited by the foregoing).
- Rev. J.F.G. Glossop (vicar of S.Mary's) in the Parish Magazines for August and October 1939.
- 4c & d. From the original letter and materials held in the County Records Office at Chichester.
- 4e. Mr.Winant, the American Ambassador, quoted in the Parish Magazine (June 1945).
- 4f. Rev.Victor Standing (vicar of S.Mary's); Pam Hopper.
- 4g. Michael Hemsley; Brenda Frances; Betty Bishop; Pauline Patten; Daphne McAlear; Jeremy Goldsmith; Gillian Goldsmith; Glynis Docker; Michael Newbold; Peggie Elford; Molly Money; Cathy Hemsley.
- 4h. From 'The Elixir' by George Herbert (1593-1632).

THIS CHURCH

Richard Jackson (baritone)
Jane Money (mezzo soprano)
Tony Potter and Larry Yates (narrators)
Philip Adams (organ)

IXION:

Rowland Sutherland (flute, piccolo and bass flute)
Yao Yi (free-bass accordion)
Kirsten le Strange (violin)
Patrick Jones ('cello)
Jub Davis (doublebass)
Joby Burgess (percussion)
Michael Finnissy (piano)

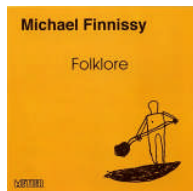
The Choir of Saint Mary de Haura Church and guests (Janet Barry, Ellen Behrens, Barbara-Anne Brunt, Pauline Cakebread, Peggie Elford, Ro Hodson, Molly Money, Lucinda Page, Katie Ritson, Margaret Savage, Marion Standing, Mary Thomas; Jim Baker, Jeremy Goldsmith, Michael Newbold, Colin Symes, and Neil Turner)

The Saint Mary de Haura Handbell Ringers (Eunice Kenward, Colin Hearn, Paul Lynn; Andrew Parrott, Ellen Brown, Val Lynn; Jim Lilley, Joan Lambley; Peter Sayers, and Sarah Willis)

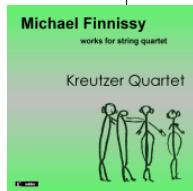
Conducted by the composer

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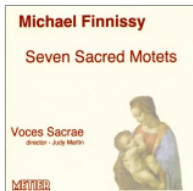
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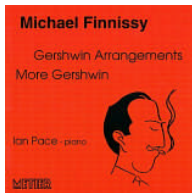
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Kreutzer Quartet



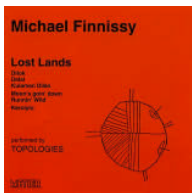
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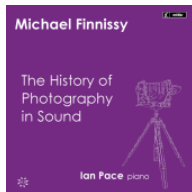
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Ian Pace (piano)



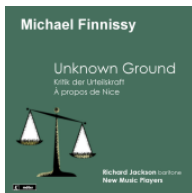
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Gershwin Arrangements
Ian Pace (piano)



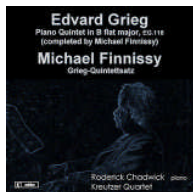
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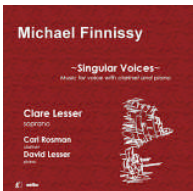
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Grieg and Finnissy Piano Quintets
Roderick Chadwick/Kreutzer Quartet



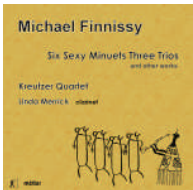
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'Mississippi Hornpipes'
Darragh Morgan (violin) / Mary Dullea (piano)



MSV 28557

'Singular Voices'
Clare Lesser (soprano) / David Lesser (piano)



MSV 28581

'Six Sexy Minuets Three Trios';
Linda Merrick (clarinet) / Kreutzer Quartet

Other works by Michael Finnissy can be found on
Métier and Divine Art albums.



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THIS CHURCH

music by **Michael Finnissy**

performed by **Ixion** (conducted by the composer)
Richard Jackson Jane Money

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|---|-----------------|-------|
| 1 | <i>Part I</i> | 16:16 |
| 2 | <i>Part II</i> | 19:34 |
| 3 | <i>Part III</i> | 14:05 |
| 4 | <i>Part IV</i> | 7:45 |

Total Time 65:30



This recording was made at the church of St Mary de Haura, Shoreham on 14 and 15 February 2003.
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Booklet design and layout: David Lefeber

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