



## Andrew Nethsingha and The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge release *Magnificat 2*

*Album features world premiere recording of Julian Anderson's Evening Canticles and booklet introduction by former Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams*



**Signum Records | 16 April 2021 | SIGCD667**

Andrew Nethsingha and The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, release *Magnificat 2*, the second volume in their highly-praised *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* series. The album, due to be released on Signum Records on 16 April, features nine settings of the Evening Canticles. This album continues to explore the breadth of imagination with which composers have approached the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* texts, having been utilised in Christian worship for over 1,000 years. This repertoire is the lifeblood of the Choir, who sing settings of these texts on a daily basis.

The nine settings of Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis featured on *Magnificat 2* fall into two groups - four by celebrated Organist-Composers, written between 1932 and 1952, and four by non-church musicians from 1974-1989. The recording culminates with a contemporary setting by Julian Anderson, composed for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St John's Chapel, a neat follow-on from the previous album's final track of canticles by Michael Tippett, commissioned for the College's 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The aim of the recording is to compare the varied ways in which composers have created musical form out of these timeless texts, and Andrew Nethsingha has selected these choices due to a variety of links between them. These include notable clergymen-commissioners of the mid-twentieth century; Christ Church, Oxford as the place Walton was chorister, Watson was Organist and for which Swayne composed *Magnificat I*; and French influences for both the works by Berkeley and Anderson.

This album follows the first volume of Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis settings, titled simply *Magnificat*, released in 2019. This first volume was 'Editor's Choice' in Gramophone Magazine, given five stars by Choir & Organ Magazine, and The Observer called it '*inventive and brilliant*'. The two volumes are designed to compliment one another, with the first in the series starting earlier (Stanford, 1880s) and the second bringing the listener up to the present day.

The final work of the album, Julian Anderson's *Evening Canticles* was commissioned by the Choir of St John's, and is presented in its world premiere recording here. This is the first time the composer has set the texts in English, and he chooses to emphasise the contrasts between the two texts through the music. This difference is highlighted with his use of sprung and free rhythms in the Magnificat, followed by an austere Nunc Dimittis with expressively shaped melodic lines.

**Andrew Nethsingha**, Director of The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, said: "*I am very excited to be releasing this disc, especially at a time when the choir has been unable to sing to a public congregation for over a year. I think it is perhaps the best recording the choir and I have made during my first 14 years at St John's. This is music which we live with day by day, and interpretations deepen over time. I am keen to share this fine repertoire with others. It fascinates me how the two texts, Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, can provoke such varied responses from composers.*"

Composer **Julian Anderson**, said: "*I was enormously excited to be invited to compose my Evening Canticles for Andrew Nethsingha and the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge. I want to thank all the performers for giving the work such a splendid launch, and for the magnificent recording on this CD. The work is dedicated to Andrew Nethsingha.*"

The album includes illuminating booklet notes, featuring an introduction from former Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams, alongside Andrew Nethsingha's conductor reflections and a note from Julian Anderson, with scans of the original manuscripts of the works. This is thought to be the first time that all of these manuscripts have been published. To view the booklet notes, please [click here](#), or scan the QR code below.

The disc will be available from 16 April 2021 on Signum Records.

[www.sjcchoir.co.uk](http://www.sjcchoir.co.uk)

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



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For more information, please contact Tessa Deterding at Premier  
[tessa.deterding@premiercomms.com](mailto:tessa.deterding@premiercomms.com) | +44 7870 859 633

Image attached:

Andrew Nethsingha with singers from the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge

## Notes to Editors

### Track listing



#### **Herbert Howells (1892-1983)**

Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis

*Collegium Regale*

1 Magnificat

2 Nunc Dimittis

#### **Giles Swayne (b. 1946)**

3 Magnificat I

#### **Sydney Watson (1903-1991)**

Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis in E

4 Magnificat

5 Nunc Dimittis

#### **William Walton (1902-1983)**

Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis

*Chichester Service*

6 Magnificat

7 Nunc Dimittis

#### **Lennox Berkeley (1903-1989)**

Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis

*Chichester Service*

8 Magnificat  
9 Nunc Dimittis

**Herbert Sumsion (1899-1995)**

Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis in G  
10 Magnificat  
11 Nunc Dimittis

**Francis Jackson (b. 1917)**

Evening Service in G  
12 Magnificat  
13 Nunc Dimittis

**Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)**

14 Magnificat

**Julian Anderson (b. 1967)**

Evening Canticles  
*St John's Service\**  
15 Magnificat  
16 Nunc Dimittis

*\* Commissioned for the College Choir*

**THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE**

**GLEN DEMPSEY** ORGAN

**JAMES ANDERSON-BESANT** ORGAN (Jackson only)

**ANDREW NETHSINGHA** DIRECTOR

**The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge**

The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge is one of the finest collegiate choirs in the world – known and loved by millions from its broadcasts, concert tours and over 100 recordings. Founded in the 1670s, the Choir is known for its rich, warm and distinctive sound, its expressive interpretations and its ability to sing in a variety of styles. Alongside this discipline, the Choir is particularly proud of its happy, relaxed and mutually supportive atmosphere. The Choir is directed by Andrew Nethsingha following in a long line of eminent Directors of Music, recently Dr George Guest, Dr Christopher Robinson and Dr David Hill. Their first release on their imprint with Signum Classics, *DEO*, won the Choral Award at the BBC Music Magazine Awards 2017.

**Andrew Nethsingha**

Performing in North America, South Africa, the Far East, and throughout Europe, Andrew Nethsingha has been Director of Music at St John's College, Cambridge since 2007. He has helped to set up a new recording label, 'St John's Cambridge', in conjunction with Signum. His first album on the new label, *DEO* (music by Jonathan Harvey), was a 2017 BBC Music Magazine Award winner.

Andrew Nethsingha was a chorister at Exeter Cathedral, under his father's direction. He later studied at the Royal College of Music, where he won seven prizes, and at St John's College, Cambridge. He

held Organ Scholarships under Dr Christopher Robinson at St George's Windsor, and Dr George Guest at St John's College, before becoming Assistant Organist at Wells Cathedral. He was subsequently Director of Music at Truro and Gloucester Cathedrals, and Artistic Director of the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival.