

## **Programme note**

Susato's name possibly derives from his town of birth Soest in the Netherlands. He was a calligrapher in addition to being a fine trumpet and flute player. He produced a book of dance music in 1551, the "danserye" from which La Mourisque is the best-known example. It has been arranged for the organ but works well with a variety of instruments.

A native of Gloucestershire Herbert Howells was the youngest of six children. Deputising at the age of 11 on the organ at his local parish church he started formal training in 1905 with then organist of Gloucester Cathedral Herbert Brewer. In 1912 he moved to London to study at the Royal College of Music. A diagnosis of Graves' disease spared him from the front line and trenches of World War I. Master Tallis's Testament from a set of six pieces was a favourite of the composer. It combines elements of the idiom of Tallis with Howell's own instantly recognisable harmony.

The text of Nun danket alle Gott (Now thank we all our God) was written by the Lutheran pastor Martin Rinkart (1586-1649) and published in 1636. It was later republished to the well know melody we know today, attributed to the German composer Johann Crüger (1598-1662). Bach appears to have been fond of the chorale as he used it in various forms in several cantatas and in a choral prelude for organ (BWV 657). The Cantata Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild (God the Lord is sun and shield, BWV 79) was written in Leipzig in 1725 for Reformation Day. Nun danket alle Gott features as a lively third movement. This has been arranged for organ by several well know organists including the legendary American virtuoso, Virgil Fox. The arrangement you hear today is by Lionel Lethbridge, former director of music at Denstone College.

Flor Peeters spent his early years in the village of Tielen on the border between Belgium and Holland. He studied at the Lemmens Institute in Mechelen. He later becomes organist at St. Rumbold's Cathedral in Mechelen, a position he would hold for most of his life. In 1971 he was made a Baron by the King of Belgium "in recognition of the exceptional merits acquired by promoting music culture in Belgium and its emanation in foreign countries throughout the world." The Aria dates from the War years; it originated in 1943 as the slow movement of a Sonata for trumpet and piano. The expressive melody unfolds above an accompaniment of soft repeated chords a technique that Peeters used to equally telling effect in the slow movement of his Organ Concerto. His Largo has a pulsating pedal part reminiscent of the Adagio from the Toccata Adagio and Fugue in C BWV 564 by J.S. Bach. He wrote well over 100 pieces during his life. The renowned Glasgow organist Gordon Frier who passed in 2022 in his 93rd year studied with Flor Peeters.

A pupil of the Paris Conservatoire Alain's life was tragically cut short defending Saumur in World War II. His most famous work Litanies refers to a specific form of prayer involving repeated petitions. The work appears to represent the prayers of a troubled soul growing more and more fervent. A pedal solo accelerates into a massive pedal point on G sharp with cascading chords in the left-hand destroying tonality. The piece ends unresolved with a chord

comprising notes from Ab major and Eb minor which have been in conflict with one another throughout.

British composer Geoffrey Atkinson was born in Surrey and studied at the University of Aberdeen. From 1977 until his retirement in 2018 he was Master of Music at Queen's Cross Church in Aberdeen. He edited nearly 30 volumes of 18th and early 19th century English organ music including the complete organ works of John Bennett, Maurice Greene, John Travers, Samuel Wesley, William Russell, and Thomas Adams. He has written numerous compositions and arrangements. His "A Little Liturgical Suite" comprise three short movements based on Scottish Folk Melodies. These are *Prelude* (Bonnie lass amongst the heather), *Plea* (I'll bid my heart be still) and *Postlude* (The trumpeter of Fyvie).

Shostakovich wrote his second piano concerto in 1957 for his Son Maxim's 19th birthday. It was premiered during his graduation at the Moscow Conservatory. The piece starts in a minor key before a hauntingly beautiful theme appears in the major, rather like the sun breaking through on a cloudy day. The movement is very reminiscent of the slow movements of the concertos of Beethoven and Mozart.

How to Train Your Dragon is a 2025 American fantasy adventure film and a remake of the 2010 animated film. It is based upon the 2003 novel by Cressida Cowell. The soundtrack is by the English film music composer John Powell, who has written the music for over 70 films. His style is influenced by the music of Sibelius. One of the most famous themes, Test Drive, has been arranged by organist, conductor and presenter Anna Lapwood, who in May this year was appointed as the first ever official organist of the Royal Albert Hall.

Louis Vierne was the organist of Notre Dame de Paris. The very organ bench at which he died in the cathedral during a recital can still be viewed in La Tribune The organ builder and friend of Louis Vierne, Henry Willis, allegedly hummed the chimes of Big Ben to the composer for his Carillon de Westminster. Whether he misheard, whether Willis hummed it incorrectly or Vierne deliberately changed the notes for his own musical purpose we will never know. Whatever the explanation the second quarter of the chime sequence is incorrect. Further, Big Ben chimes in the key of E using the 4 notes G#, F#, E, and B. Vierne's masterpiece is in the key of D and therefore uses F#, E, D and A.