

DIAMOND JUBILEE COMPOSER

WILL TODD



“One of the UK’s most sought-after, versatile composers”

Tempo Magazine

“Will Todd’s striking oratorio.....brilliantly scored”

BBC Music Magazine

“This music is a gift for singing”

Independent on Sunday

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Introduction

Will Todd is a widely admired and well-known composer, jazz pianist and workshop leader.

He grew up in the city of Durham in North East England, where his grandfather worked as a coal miner.

As Head Chorister at St Oswald's Church, Durham, Todd was awarded music scholarships at both school and university, and on graduation he received a 'Highly Commended' MMus from Bristol University in 1993.

Todd has been experimenting creatively on the piano since the age of three and his music spans multiple genres and idioms. He began composing at the age of ten and is as accomplished in the eclectic worlds of jazz and musical theatre as he is in the classical worlds of choral music and opera. He frequently performs as a pianist and leads the Will Todd Ensemble, with whom he has recorded many of his compositions including his flagship work *Mass in Blue*.

He has collaborated with some of the world's leading musicians and ensembles including the BBC Concert Orchestra, The Hallé Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, Welsh National Opera, the Royal Opera House, English National Opera Studio, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Opera Holland Park, BBC Singers Voces 8, Gareth Malone Voices, The Sixteen and Tenebrae.

Todd's work is published by Oxford University Press¹ and Boosey & Hawkes², and Tyalgum press and much of his music is recorded on the Signum Classics label³. Choirs all over the world perform his music at concerts and workshops.

Will Todd lives south of London, in Guildford, with his wife, and their three children.

In addition to his composing, performing and choral leadership roles, Todd holds the following positions:

Visiting Lecturer at Royal Academy of Music
Associate Lecturer at Surrey University
President of Durham Choral Society
President of St Albans Chamber Choir
President of Derby Choral Union
Honorary Vice President of Salisbury Community Choir

Awards:

Verdi International Opera Competition 2001
Classic FM Hall of Fame 2016
Specialist Classical Chart No 1 - Alice's Adventures in Wonderland 2015
Classic FM - Presenter Albums of the Year 2014 (Lux Et Veritas, Tenebrae)

¹ <https://global.oup.com/academic/category/arts-and-humanities/sheet-music/composers/toddw/?lang=en&cc=gb>

² http://www.boosey.com/pages/cr/composer/composer_main.asp?composerid=18544

³ <http://www.signumrecords.com/catalogue/will-todd.html>

Compositions and Albums

Mass in Blue

Will Todd is perhaps best known and loved for his composition and many performances of *Mass in Blue*^{4,5} his jazz setting of the Latin mass. Todd has given many highly acclaimed renditions of this unique piece. The work received its UK premiere in 2003, and its US debut in 2011.

The piece has now been performed internationally hundreds of times by both professional and amateur choirs, acquiring a large and devoted fan base as a result. *Mass in Blue* is continuing to gain popularity all over the world and has been performed at many prestigious venues such as the Lincoln Center in New York, the Barbican Centre, London

Mass in Blue has been recorded by the Will Todd Ensemble with the Vasari Singers for Signum Records and has achieved best selling ranking of number 18 in the Opera and Vocal, Choral, Mass section on Amazon.⁶

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQ5uiHWs8Ms>

⁵ http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/choir_and_brass/mib_fullband/

⁶ <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Todd-Mass-Blue-Vasari-Singers/dp/B000H80LUY>

The Call of Wisdom

Todd's anthem *The Call of Wisdom*⁷ was commissioned by St Paul's Cathedral⁸ for the Diamond Jubilee Thanksgiving Service 2012, where it was performed by the Diamond Choir in front of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and broadcast to millions around the world.⁹

The single featured in the top 10 of the UK iTunes classical songs chart and the *The Call of Wisdom* album was recorded later that year.¹⁰ It features award-winning choir Tenebrae with the English Chamber Orchestra and was Classic FM's 'CD of the week'.¹¹

⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R53ucTjPihA>

⁸ <http://www.stpauls.co.uk/News-Press/News-Archive/2012/Choirs-across-the-world-encouraged-to-sing-Diamond-Jubilee-anthem>

⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-18331677>

¹⁰ http://www.amazon.co.uk/Will-Todd-Call-Wisdom-Tenebrae/dp/B00843KKA/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1398447365&sr=8-1&keywords=the+call+of+wisdom

¹¹ <http://www.classicfm.com/composers/will-todd/>

My Lord Has Come

My Lord Has Come is an anthem included on the acclaimed *The Call of Wisdom* album and deserves special mention as a particularly well-loved and much performed piece.

It was selected by BBC Radio 3 to be the first 'door opened' on their 2013 musical Advent Calendar, and is proving equally popular in the US.¹²

My Lord Has Come was performed as part of *Christmas at Belmont 2013* and aired nationally on PBS to millions of viewers.¹³ It has also been included on many commercial recordings since including *A Great British Christmas* with Gareth Malone and saxophonist Yolanda Brown and *Songs of the Nativity* by The Sixteen.

Lux et Veritas

Lux et Veritas (Light and Truth) is a collection of sumptuous choral works in which Tenebrae are accompanied by the English Chamber Orchestra, conducted by the choir's director Nigel Short. The disc was immediately placed in the Specialist Classical Charts at number 3 on its release in 2014.

"One of this year's finest releases" Classic FM

"don't miss this movingly accessible and genuinely sensitive choral collection." Musicweb International, October 2014

¹² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/records/nzvcvp>

¹³ <http://artsnash.com/classicalmusic/graves-belmont-christmas/>

"sumptuous, soothing and reflective music for all occasions."

Northern Echo, November 2014

"Throughout, the excellent Tenebrae under Nigel Short's sensitive direction deliver the sequence of 14 short pieces with commitment and great beauty of tone." Choir and Organ, November 2014

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

In 2015 a recording of Will Todd's opera was released following sell out performances at Opera Holland Park and Royal Opera House, Linbury Theatre to a delighted fan base¹⁴. The recording shot to number 1 in the specialist Classical Charts.

Christmas in Blue

Released in December 2013, this uplifting album¹⁵ features the St Martin's Voices singing traditional Christmas carols set in Todd's distinctive jazz style. The Will Todd Ensemble is accompanied by Brandenburg Brass on this album.¹⁶

¹⁴ <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Will-Todd-Adventures-Wonderland-Holland/dp/B00U1CNZA4>

¹⁵ http://www.amazon.co.uk/Christmas-Blue-Martins-Voices-Ensemble/dp/B00H3A8BUQ/ref=sr_1_2?s=dmusic&ie=UTF8&qid=1398448902&sr=1-2&keywords=christmas+in+blue

¹⁶ <http://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/news/christmas-in-blue-the-new-cd-from-st-martins-voices/>

Broadcasts and Public Appearances

Over the years Todd has composed for and played in many prestigious, high profile performances broadcast worldwide.

Amazing Grace

A performance of Todd's jazz-influenced arrangement of **Amazing Grace**¹⁷ formed part of President Obama's Inauguration Day prayer service at St John's Episcopal Church in Washington DC 2013.¹⁸

Todd was also honoured to be asked to accompany the Choir of St Martin-in-the-Fields singing his setting of **Amazing Grace** in a live BBC Radio 3 broadcast as part of the Nelson Mandela Thanksgiving Service. Broadcast from St Martin-in-the-Fields, London, the service linked to choirs in Sophiatown, South Africa, in December 2013.

St Cecilia Service Westminster Abbey

In his role as composer and personality, Todd gave the address at the 2012 St Cecilia Service at Westminster Abbey (organized by the Musicians Benevolent Fund) in front of 2000 guests.¹⁹ The choirs of St Paul's, Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral came together for this festival service with guest readers Kiri Te Kanawa and Sir Willard White.

¹⁷

<http://www.halleonard.com/product/viewproduct.do?itemid=48022680&lid=0&key words=amazing grace will todd&subsiteid=1&>

¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/TheChoirProject/posts/397050427053136>

¹⁹ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stpaulslondon/sets/72157632063671147/>

Classic FM and the BBC

Todd's works are frequently played on Classic FM and BBC radio²⁰ where they reach an enormous listenership of fans. He has performed on live broadcasts many times and often been interviewed on BBC television and radio productions. In 2014 he was commissioned to write a choral piece for the BBC's *Great North Passion*²¹, aired on Good Friday 2014. This was an ambitious and creative project for which Todd's contribution received high accolades both from audiences and the programme producers.

"All went brilliantly, everyone was extremely pleased and your hard work, fabulous talent and absolutely beautiful song 'Searching' went a long way towards getting such a successful result. Looking forward to the next occasion!"

Pamela Hossick, Producer, BBC Religion & Ethics Production

²⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b036v8r7>

²¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2014/great-north-passion-artists.html> (Station 7 section)

Opera and Musical Theatre

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Alice in Wonderland, written in 2013 for Opera Holland Park, is scored for piano and ensemble. Having received great critical acclaim^{22,23} it is now in its fifth sell out season. The single *I Flew High in My Dreams* reached 8 in the classical singles charts and the album shot to number 1.

"This new take on Alice in Wonderland is one of the most charming, least condescending operas for children that John Allison has ever seen." Telegraph

"This is a knock-out" Independent

The Blackened Man

Todd's *The Blackened Man*²⁴ won second prize in the International Verdi Opera Competition in 2002 and was later staged at the Linbury, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, scored for two pianos and percussion, and at the 2004 Buxton Festival with piano plus reduced orchestration.

²²<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/opera/10193501/Alices-Adventures-in-Wonderland-Opera-Holland-Park.html> *

²³ <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/classical/reviews/classical-review-alices-adventures-in-wonderland-holland-park-opera-london-8726288.html> *

²⁴ http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/opera_sheet/the_blacknd_man/

The Screams of Kitty Genovese

The Screams of Kitty Genovese, hailed as “one of the most powerful musicals of the last decade”²⁵ is a music theatre work scored for piano and rock band. It has been produced at the Boston Conservatory, the New York Musical Theatre Festival and Tete a Tete Opera in London and Edinburgh.

“hold the hand-wringing over the precipitous decline of the American musical theater, please. Keep your eyes and ears open – The Screams of Kitty Genovese will have you on the edge of your seat.” *New York Times*

²⁵ <http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/musical-theatre-sheet/the-screams-kitty/>

Other Collaborations and Commissions

Saint Cuthbert

Todd's oratorio *Saint Cuthbert*²⁶, with a libretto by Ben Dunwell, is based on the life of this saint with historical links to Todd's home town of Durham. This work has been performed and recorded by the Hallé Orchestra and Choir under Christopher Austin.

"Will Todd's striking oratorio . . . brilliantly scored" Nicholas Williams/
BBC Music Magazine/ 2003

"Todd has an extraordinary command of the gestural language of oratorio . . . he has an impressive melodic gift and uses it to excellent effect." Ivan Moody/*International Record Review / 2003*

The Burning Road

*The Burning Road*²⁷ is a cantata about the Jarrow March which Todd was commissioned to write by the Northampton Bach Choir and was received to crucial acclaim.

"I had been sent a full orchestral score and choral score in advance to peruse, but nothing could prepare one for the sheer impact of this tumultuous work" Jill Barlow/*St Albans Observer / 2002*

"...Todd's operatic experience ... gives it enough dramatic clout to draw the listener into the plight, hope and eventual disillusionment of the Marchers." David Blewitt/*Opera/ 2000*

²⁶ http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/choir_and_orchestra/st_cuthbert/

²⁷ http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/choir_and_orchestra/the_burning_road/

*“Todd's lyrical and serious language is fully in evidence in **The Burning Road**. This is only secondarily a political and nostalgic document. First and foremost it is a work of smoking sincerity and bitter heroic determination. A protest work but one that never loses touch with musical values.”* Rob Barnett/ MusicWeb/ 1999

*“[**The Burning Road's**] music is a gift for singing - paying dues to Messiaen, Vaughan Williams, Britten - but alive and energised and packing an emotional punch. Todd is someone who has begun to make a name for himself in community and West End contexts but is still waiting for his moment. It will come. **The Burning Road** is more than half way there.”* Michael White/ *The Independent on Sunday*/ 1999

“If today's music can roughly be divided between the fiercely complex and that aiming for a wider appeal, the Durham-born Todd's is firmly of the latter, his technical accomplishments craftily subsumed into the larger dramatic sweep.” Thomas Hall/ *The Journal, Newcastle* / 1997

Among Angels

Choral work **Among Angels**²⁸ was commissioned by the Genesis Foundation and was premiered by world-renowned chamber choir The Sixteen in Salzburg in 2006. It was recorded by them for the album **Padre Pio Prayer**. A further recording of this piece by Tenebrae is available on **Call of Wisdom**, an album for the Signum Classics label. With a libretto by Ben Dunwell, its silken textures for 8 part choir and 2 harps are an evocation of angels in flight.

²⁸ http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/choir_and_keyboard/among-angels-2/

Stay with me Lord

The Genesis Foundation then commissioned Todd as part of their Padre Pio Project with The Sixteen. Todd's lyrical setting of *Stay with me Lord*²⁹ for choir and piano was premiered at Westminster Cathedral in 2008 and released on the CD *Padre Pio Prayer*.³⁰

Sweetness and Badness / Whirlwind

Written for WNO Max, *Sweetness and Badness* was performed in a tour during autumn 2006 and received over 40 performances³¹, and *Whirlwind* (commissioned by Streetwise Opera) was first performed at The Sage, Gateshead in the same year.³²

"Todd's two-part chorus writing is tight and vivid, provoking an impassioned performance from the homeless and ex-homeless cast of Streetwise Opera." Independent on Sunday

"The contemporary libretto fits beautifully with Will Todd's resoundingly dramatic score, which can surely leave no one unmoved." Tamzin Lewis / The Journal, Newcastle/ 2006

²⁹ <http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/choir-and-keyboard/stay-with-me-lord/>

³⁰ http://www.amazon.co.uk/Padre-Pio-Prayer-Sixteen/dp/B0020E7HVE/ref=sr_1_fkmr1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1401202227&sr=8-1-fkmr1&keywords=padre+pio+will+todd*

³¹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/reviews/previews-sweetness-and-badness-wales-millennium-centre-cardiff-424994.html>

³² http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/opera_sheet/whirlwind/

Firework / Damned and Divine

*Firework*³³ is a music theatre piece by composer Will Todd and libretto by Elizabeth Clarke Melville which was commissioned by Glyndebourne for Glyndebourne Youth Opera Group and Brighton Youth Orchestra in 2002. The work was performed on tour in Scotland and at Brighton Festival and was also part of the Elemental concert performed at Glyndebourne in 2004.

Will Todd's *Damned and Divine*³⁴ was a promenade installation piece at English National Opera at the London Coliseum commissioned and produced by ENO Studio. The piece utilised the whole of the Coliseum's front of house, each circle of Dante's Divine Comedy was created through specific installations that the audience had to walk up through until they reached 'heaven' - in the gods, and were then delivered back out on the street at the end of the piece.

Instrumental Works

Jazz Concerto for Clarinet

Todd was commissioned by world renowned clarinetist Emma Johnson to write his critically acclaimed *Jazz Concerto for Clarinet* also called *Concerto for Emma*:³⁵

"Johnson then took centre stage with the world premiere of Todd's jazz inspired Clarinet Concerto that fully involved the

³³ <http://www.glyndebourne.com/education/about-glyndebourne-education/education-projects/commissions/firework/>

³⁴ <http://www.emmawee.com/page22.htm>

³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkP52IXo01U>

soloist, both in its writing and first performance."

Chris Francis/ Worthing Herald/ 2010

"Sinuous harmonies and fizzing tempo changes."

David Whetstone/ The Journal/ 2010

The work has been recorded on the Nimbus label with the BBC Concert Orchestra and has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 to critical acclaim³⁶

Other Concerti and Suites

Todd has also written a *Violin Concerto* (commissioned by The Brunel Ensemble)³⁷, a *Saxophone Concerto*³⁸, an *Orchestral Suite from Isambard Kingdom Brunel*³⁹ and *Festival Fanfare* (commissioned by InterOpera).⁴⁰

Recent Choral Commissions

Recent projects include a much praised setting of Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale*^{41,42} for Hertfordshire Chorus (performed at The Barbican, London and The Sage, Gateshead), and a new commission for Crouch End Festival Choral *Rage Against the Dying of the Light*⁴³ (premiered at The Barbican) which is a setting of Dylan Thomas' famous poem *Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night*.

³⁶<http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/recordings/clarinet-concerto/>

³⁷ <http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/instrumental-sheet/violin-concerto/>

³⁸ <http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/instrumental-sheet/saxophone-concerto/>

³⁹<http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/instrumental-sheet/orch-suite-brunel/>

⁴⁰ <http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/instrumental-sheet/festival-fanfare/>

⁴¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZ_eCf8lhAQ

⁴² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5ivXzJOCyY>

⁴³ <http://www.cefc.org.uk/recentconcerts/toddandmahler.aspx>

Will Todd is renowned for writing for children's choirs and recent commissions have included performances involving over 2200 pupils at The Royal Albert Hall, of *We Will Remember Them*⁴⁴ (written for Hertfordshire Music Service) and a Royal Festival Hall premiere for Reed's School entitled *Let Me Speak and Think and Live*⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ [http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/choir and orchestra/we will remember them/](http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/choir%20and%20orchestra/we%20will%20remember%20them/)

⁴⁵ [http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/choir and orchestra/let me speak and think and live/](http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/choir%20and%20orchestra/let%20me%20speak%20and%20think%20and%20live/)

Workshop Leader

A naturally inspirational personality who is passionate about bringing music to as wide an audience as possible, Todd is already much in demand all over the world to lead singing days for choirs. He frequently runs sessions in the choral and corporate worlds using the skills and challenges of music making as a motivational metaphor.⁴⁶

Association of British Choral Directors Conventions 2013 and 2014

At the 2013 ABCD annual convention Todd was asked by guest host John Rutter to accompany him in welcoming the international choral leaders in a communal singing evening. Todd was delighted to have been invited to be the guest host himself for the 2014 ABCD welcome evening and be a featured artist at the convention in Cardiff, which opened with a performance of *Mass in Blue*. As one of the UK's most celebrated composers, Will Todd has been invited again this year to the convention in Scotland.

American Choral Directors Association 2015 in Salt Lake City and 2017 in Minneapolis

Todd was commissioned by the biggest choral convention in the world of ACDA to compose a *Gloria*⁴⁷ setting for one of the Honor Choirs performing at this bi-annual national conference. In 2017 he will return to the conference where his new release *Jazz Missa Brevis*⁴⁸ will be included on the programme.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ <http://willtodd.co.uk/presenter/>

⁴⁷ http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/choir_and_keyboard/gloria_in_excelsis/

⁴⁸ http://willtodd.co.uk/products-page/choir_and_brass/jazz_missa_brevis/

⁴⁹ <http://www.acda-mn.org/acda-national-conference-minneapolis-2>

Future Projects

Plans include a commission from Opera North Education Department, a work for Hertfordshire Music Service with Michael Rosen to be performed at the Royal Albert Hall and a production of *A Christmas Carol* in association with St Martin-in-the-Fields and James Clutton from Opera Holland Park. Will Todd also hopes to record a new disc of his choral music in 2017 for release later in the year.