

University of Manchester

CHORUS

MUMS Symphony Orchestra

Featuring Michael Tippett's

A Child of Our Time

& Premiere of Murrough Connolly's

Litmus Papers



MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

Murrough Connolly

LITMUS PAPERS FOR ORCHESTRA (14')

The Concept

Over the past year, I have been fascinated by synaesthetic composers such as Olivier Messiaen and their descriptions of how certain musical sounds can evoke particular colours. Litmus Papers was a collaborative project which involved several months of working with Tommy Harrison (postgraduate artist at the Manchester School of Art) and our intention was to strengthen the connection between visual colour and harmonic colour. We devised a concept which we could both interpret simultaneously, sharing ideas as we worked to create our artistic and musical works. The concept, featuring just four colours (cadmium orange, permanent green, indigo and coral red), is two-fold:

1. To investigate how the perception of coral red objects can transform when they occur over background colours of a less dominant or recessive nature.
2. To include three manifestations of coral red which fade and decrease in intensity (intense coral red – fading coral red – pale red, fading into white).

The Piece

Harmony, instrumental timbre and register play an important role in conveying the four colours and realising the strategy for this piece. They work together to evoke emotional responses which are intended to closely match the feeling or reaction a person may have when they experience the visual manifestation of a particular colour. There are three parts in this piece and they each finish with a coral red occurrence. A brief progression through the colours used and some aural cues can be found below.

Part 1: Cadmium orange opens the piece, creating a sense of warmth, fuzziness and security (ft. horns, cello). A gradual transition to a bright, shimmering permanent green (ft. violins, upper woodwind, glockenspiel) soon grows to a climax which introduces the first and most intense appearance of coral red (tutti, featuring brass).

Part 2: A solo double bass enters and is accompanied by dark, oily chords tinged with blue notes. This represents indigo. As the indigo grows in prominence, fragments of permanent green return above. The texture continues to thicken and this introduces the second, less intense appearance of the coral red.

Part 3: The cadmium orange returns once more (ft. horns). However, there are frequent permanent green interjections with hints of indigo. All three colours work together and are followed by pale red. The red continues to dissipate until it fades into white.

Murrough Connolly

COMPOSER

Murrough Connolly is an Irish composer and classical guitarist living in Manchester, where he is studying for a PhD in Music Composition at the University of Manchester. His doctoral research, supervised by Prof. Camden Reeves, explores the concept of harmonic colour in music by integrating harmonic practices from contemporary classical music and jazz. Many of his recent compositions combine his childhood influences (blues and jazz) with spectral techniques. Murrough's music has been performed by renowned ensembles such as The Irish Guitar Quartet, Quatuor Danel and Psappha. Future plans include working with pianist Ben Powell as part of Psappha's 'Composing for...' scheme. Murrough's choral piece, 'From the Chrysalis', will also be premiered by the UCC singers in Co. Cork in the summer.



Michael Tippett (1905–1998)

A CHILD OF OUR TIME (66')

Michael Tippett was no ordinary composer. He was an artist with a social conscience and a musician with a sense of political awareness. Throughout his career he used his compositional output to champion causes and to challenge social and political injustices. It comes as no surprise then that Tippett found the war years very challenging. He was a passionate pacifist, and the Second World War was a source of moral outrage and frustration. For his stance as a conscientious objector, he was incarcerated for three months in 1943.

Tippett began work on *A Child of Our Time* prior to the start of the war, to challenge international apathy about the plight of Jewish refugees in Europe. He wrote the text himself, based on headlines taken from the newspapers of the day. He had read about Herschel Grynszpan, a young Polish Jew who had fled to France to escape the Nazi pogrom. Grynszpan's parents were being persecuted by the Nazis. The young man snapped and walked into the German embassy in Paris where he shot and fatally wounded a junior German diplomat, Ernst vom Rath. The Nazi retribution was severe and vigorous; his parents were executed and the young Grynszpan disappeared, while the incident was used to justify a considerable increase in Nazi attacks and persecution of Jews in Germany, including the events of Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass) where some 30,000 Jews were arrested, 1,000 synagogues burned, and 7,000 Jewish businesses destroyed. Tippett was very moved by the story and was inspired to write this oratorio. *Newsweek* magazine would later describe the piece as "something Handel might have written had he lived in the age of Auschwitz".

Tippett had largely completed *A Child of Our Time* by 1941, but it was not until 1944, after his release from prison, that he managed to mount a full-scale production. It is a decidedly twentieth-century composition, but Tippett was acutely aware of, and respectful towards, his major predecessors Handel and J. S. Bach. Written in three parts like Handel's *Messiah*, it makes extensive use of alternating narrative recitatives, arias, and choruses. Notably, Tippett makes extensive use of spirituals as a replacement for Bach's Lutheran chorales, as a way of passing political comment on the underlying problem of racism.

Tippett described the basic structure of his oratorio as follows: “Part I of the work deals with the general state of oppression in our time. Part II presents the particular story of a young man’s attempt to seek justice by violence and the catastrophic consequences; and Part III considers the moral to be drawn, if any.”

A Child of Our Time is a powerful and emotive work, which continues to have a great impact on listeners. Its universal themes and easily understood text remain central to its enduring popularity and success. Many still see Tippett’s message, his campaign against division and persecution, against violence and war, as a relevant rallying call. Others are drawn to the premonitory quality of the work. In 1980, not long after the Pol Pot regime’s massacres in Cambodia and several years before Slobodan Milošević’s rampages in Bosnia and Kosovo, Tippett said: “When I wrote the work, I was so engulfed in the actions of the period, I never considered its prophetic quality. But it seems that the growing violence springing out of divisions of nation, race, religion, status, colour, or even just rich and poor is probably the deepest present threat to the social fabric of all human society.”

Programme note by Daniel A. Jones (edited by Malcolm Chapman)



Robert Guy

CONDUCTOR

Robert Guy hails from North Wales and is a conductor, concert presenter, artistic director and teacher with a breadth of communication and interpersonal skills. Robert passionately believes in utilising the art's unique potential to communicate, connect and empower. An advocate of new music, Robert has conducted 45 world premières which include working with the Orchestra of Opera North, NEW Sinfonia in Rebecca Dale's Requiem Materna and Paul Mealor's Symphony No.2 and Immix Ensemble. He was selected by Kirill Karabits to work with the Britten Pears Orchestra in their Young Artists'

Programme and the first Digital Masterclass with Neemi Järvi hosted by Meta Artists International in 2021. A natural communicator, his podcast 'Declassified: The Classical Music Podcast' has reached an international audience.



Robert's collaborative approach to building trust with musicians has been shaped by his early professional career as a viola player, where he notably played with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra of Opera North and alongside the Allegri and Edinburgh String Quartets. As Co-Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of NEW Sinfonia (a professional chamber orchestra in North Wales), orchestra in residence at the North Wales International Music Festival, Robert has worked with leading soloists including Ye-Eun Choi, Tamsin Waley Cohen, Federico Colli and Raphael Wallfisch and has led education workshops featured by the BBC. A committed advocate of collaborative working, Robert leads an evolving partnership with Welsh National Opera and is grateful to the Arts Council of Wales for their support in his vision to create a partnership with Disability Arts Cymru.

As a guest conductor Robert works regularly with Manchester Camerata where he has performed with Tine Thing Helseth, recorded for Sony Playstation and performed for Manchester International Festival. Passionate about audience and community engagement, Robert is a skilled amateur and workshop leader in a range of settings from schools to care homes in cities and rural communities. Internationally, Robert has been selected for prestigious masterclasses working with the Berlin Philharmonic at the Conductors Lab in Aix-en-Provence, Scottish Chamber Orchestra with Sian Edwards at the St Magnus International Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival Chorus with Simon Halsey and Nicholas Fink, and the Berlin Sinfonietta with Mikhail Jurowski.

Robert is proud to be Director of the University of Manchester's elite undergraduate Conducting Programme, Head of Choral Programmes and Director of Ensembles. In these roles he directed the first performance of Barry Cooper's new Bärenreiter edition of Beethoven's Missa Solemnis, commissioned a new choral work Light Into My Dark by John Casken and has led memorable performances ranging from Elgar's The Dream of Gerontius to Rachmaninoff's Symphonic Dances. He has been involved in several prestigious projects including at the BBC Proms as Assistant Conductor to Simon Halsey and the BBC Proms Youth Choir. At Huddersfield University he devised and now delivers two BMus courses teaching and mentoring students with a particular focus on equipping aspiring music teachers. He is also a faculty member for Cardiff International Academy of Conducting.

Robert is currently Principal Guest Conductor to Stockport Symphony Orchestra where he has co-presented concerts with Lindsay Russell (Blue Peter). He is Principal Conductor to the Orchestra of Square Chapel where he recently completed a Beethoven milestone having conducted all nine symphonies. He has conducted the Huddersfield Choral Society and Huddersfield Philharmonic Orchestra in Britten's War Requiem and Walton's Belshazzar's Feast at Huddersfield Town Hall.

www.robert-guy.com

@RobGuyConductor Declassified: The Classical Music Podcast

SOLOISTS



Katherine Macaulay SOPRANO

Katherine is a Welsh soprano and conductor, who made her professional opera debut last summer at Buxton International Festival as the lead role in Jonathan Dove's 'The Enchanted Pig'. She is currently in her final year of music studies at the University of Manchester where she studies voice with Catherine Mikic. Previously, Katherine studied voice, violin, and French horn as part of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama's Junior advanced course. She also took part in a masterclass with Dame Felicity Lott as part of Cardiff Singer of the World and, in 2019, reached the UK national final of the Rotary Club's vocal

competition. Her previous roles have included Cosette in 'Les Misérables', Johanna in a Welsh language version of 'Sweeney Todd', and most recently 'Jenny' in the Manchester University Music Society's production of Kurt Weill's 'Down in the Valley'. She has also sung in numerous choirs including the early music choir Welsh Camerata, Ad Solem, The Halle Choir, Cardiff County Youth Choir, and the National Youth Choir of Wales. She is so excited to sing with an orchestra for the first time, and is honoured to be performing as part of such a powerful and resonant work.

Benedict Parker TENOR

Benedict Parker is a Tenor singer, Pianist and second year music student at Manchester University. He grew up in Winchester and has performed a variety of vocal repertoire, exploring art songs and operatic material in most European languages under the guidance of James Ottaway and later Martin Bussey. Singing from an early age, he understudied Miles in Holland Park Opera's production of Britten's 'The Turn of the Screw' as a treble, and was a frequent soloist in the National Children's Choir. Aged 17, he achieved three marks off a perfect score in his ABRSM grade 8 exam. He is a member of the Rodolphus Choir and has toured northern Germany with Winchester College Chapel Choir. More recently he successfully applied for the European Youth Choir, (originally for Daniel Barenboim's cancelled 250th birthday production of Beethoven's 9th symphony) and is excited to participate in future projects. Whilst at university Benedict has been involved in a number of vocal ensembles, including Ad Solem chamber choir and the A Cappella Society, and is applying to conservatoire to pursue a career as a soloist. Outside of singing, he has a range of other musical interests, including composition for media and contemporary jazz.





Toluwani Idowu

ALTO

Toluwani is an Alto who started her singing career with the National Youth Choir of Scotland Dundee regional branch. She progressed to become a member of the main National Youth Choir of Scotland at the age of 16. In 2020 she entered the Rotary Young Musician competition in Dundee where she won first place and then went on to win the North of Scotland District competition. This won her the chance to perform at the National (Scottish) Regional final where she was placed 2nd. She is currently in multiple ensembles such as Ad solem, Somnium, the Holy name student choir and, of course, the University of Manchester Chorus.

Dominic Carver

BASS

Dominic is the *Marjorie and John Brooks* Scholar at the Royal Northern College of Music and is also reading Music at the University of Manchester. While in Manchester, he has joined multiple vocal ensembles, including the RNCM Chamber Choir and *Canzonetta*, and is a bass in the eleventh cohort of Genesis Sixteen led by Harry Christophers and Eamonn Dougan. He is a current choral conductor with the University of Manchester Chorus, under the tutelage of Robert Guy, working closely with Ad Solem Chamber Choir to broaden his technical and aural skills and develop as a well-rounded musician.



Before moving to Manchester, Dominic sang with the internationally award-winning choir the Bromley Boy Singers, under Travis Baker, working with musicians such as Marin Alsop, Bob Chilcott, Mary King, and Jeremy Jackman, performing in venues such as the Royal Festival Hall, the Royal Albert Hall, Notre Dame Cathedral, and St. John's, Smith Square. Through singing, he is able to access other areas of the performing arts; he recently portrayed the role of Mr. Northwind in Jonathan Dove's opera 'The Enchanted Pig' as part of the Buxton International Festival's Platform 3 initiative, was a Chorus member RNCM's 2020 autumn production of Janáček's 'The Cunning Little Vixen' in RNCM, and most recently in Manchester University Music Society's double bill of Williamson's 'The Happy Prince' and Weill's 'Down in the Valley' in February 2022. This is Dominic's first concert solo debut and is thrilled to present this alongside such incredible young musicians.

UNDERSTUDY SOLOISTS



Glesni Jones SOPRANO

Glesni originally from Anglesey is currently a first-year undergraduate student at the Royal Northern College of Music and is thoroughly enjoying the variety of opportunities provided on her course. She is currently receiving lessons by Hilary Summers at the RNCM. She has also attended masterclasses with experienced singers such as Lynne Dawson and Elin Manahan Thomas. As a very experienced Soprano Glesni has been successful in many competitions nationally, including the National Eisteddfod of Wales. Recently she was chosen to sing the opening solo of a commissioned work by Paul Mealor and Mererid Hopwood and a duet with the renowned Soprano Rhian Lois in a premiere concert recorded in Llangollen's National Eisteddfod Pavilion and broadcasted on S4C. Glesni has also had many choral experiences as a member of Anglesey Youth Choir for over 14 years. One of her highlights is performing Verdi's *Dies Irae* at the Royal Albert Hall in the BBC Proms. She has appeared on the Welsh TV Channel several times as a solo singer as well as part of a trio ensemble. In her final year at school, she was chosen to be a part of the chorus in Opra Cymru's production of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*. Her goal is to become a professional opera singer, performing leading roles at various venues across the world. In her spare time, she teaches privately and continues to gain pleasure from seeing her pupils succeed.

Louis de Satgé TENOR

Louis de Satgé is a Manchester-based singer and piano accompanist currently in his third year at the University of Manchester studying Music and Drama. A former head chorister at Westminster Cathedral, he has since expanded his vocal repertoire from church music to Opera and Musical Theatre. He recently accompanied opera rehearsals for the University's Music Society (Kurt Weill's *'Down in the Valley'* and Malcolm Williamson's *'The Happy Prince'*), as well as musical directing for the Musical Theatre Society (Starkid's *'A Very Potter Musical'*), involving vocal coaching and leading choir and band rehearsals. As a singer he has performed in Jonathan Dove's *'The Enchanted Pig'* in 2020, for the Manchester Contemporary Youth Opera in 2019/21, and as a member of the professional choir Canzonetta in 2021. He is currently involved with both of the University's prestigious chamber choirs, as a singer in Ad Solem and accompanist to The Cosmo Singers.





Eleanor Ridley

ALTO

Eleanor Ridley is a multi-instrumentalist and singer from Scotland. Currently in her third year studying a joint honours BA in Music and Drama at the University of Manchester, Eleanor is specialising in composition, with an interest in film scoring and direction. Eleanor is a member of and the current manager for the University's Chamber Choir 'Ad Solem', as well as a member of Manchester-based choirs 'The Marie Consort', 'Somnium', and a dep for the Manchester Oratory choir. Having directed the University's production of 'Jesus Christ Superstar' in 2019, Eleanor has just finished directing the opera 'The Happy Prince' by Malcolm Williamson, which was performed by the University's Opera Society in mid-February 2022. Despite having a passion for the creative team, Eleanor is a performer herself, starring as Maria Von Trapp in 'The Sound of Music' in 2018; performing Vivaldi's Concerto for Descant Recorder in D major alongside a professional orchestra in 2018; and playing synth keys for Andrew Lloyd Webber's 'Variations' in 2019. This Summer Eleanor finds herself heading to New York to complete an internship in film pre-production, before aiming to complete a masters degree in composition.

Angus Robertson

BASS

Angus comes from Hampshire and is currently studying for his BA in Music at the University of Manchester. Having been brought up as a chorister in Winchester Cathedral, he now enjoys singing in chamber choirs of varying sizes and is an active participant in the University of Manchester's choirs and music society, as well as a member of Kantos Chamber Choir. He also returns to Winchester Cathedral occasionally to sing as a Dep Bass on the backline. Highlights so far include tours to the Czech Republic, Colombia and Hong Kong, where he performed in choirs and in orchestras on the violin, as well as this year's MUMS Opera, where he played the Prince in Malcolm Williamson's 'The Happy Prince'. In addition to singing, Angus loves playing in bands on the guitar, bass and drums, and even brings out his bagpipes from time to time. He also assists with the running of Ad Solem as this year's Deputy Manager & Librarian.



University of Manchester **CHORUS**

With Special thanks to the Chorus Committee:

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Rowan Wilson – Vice-president
Jas Arnold – Secretary & Social Media Officer
Eleanor Jarvis – Attendance Secretary
Juliette Waterhouse – Poster/Programme Designer & Webmaster
Lara Turner – Fundraising Officer
Ben Attfield – Accompanist
Heather Steward – Librarian
Helen Orton – Treasurer
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**The University of Manchester Chorus is delighted to be premiering
'Light Into My Dark' by John Casken on 3rd December 2022!**

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