William Howard and Pavel Zemek Novák
recording in the Music Room at Champs Hill

CHAMPS HILL RECORDS

Pavel Zemek Novák 24 PRELUDES & FUGUES

William Howard, piano

World premiere recording

WILLIAM HOWARD, piano
PAVEL ZEMEK NOVÁK Twenty Four Preludes and Fugues (1989-2006)

1-12: BOOK ONE (OLD TESTAMENT)
13-14: BOOK TWO (OLD TESTAMENT)
25-36: BOOK THREE (NEW TESTAMENT) 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (Gospel of St. John 1:14)
37-47: BOOK FOUR (NEW TESTAMENT) Landscapes of the Lamb

BOOK ONE (OLD TESTAMENT)

1	Prelude One: *The Creation of Heaven and Earth*	*2'17"*
2	Fugue One: *The Creation of Man*	*1'52"*
3	Prelude Two: *The Age of the Patriarchs*	*1'37"*
4	Fugue Two: *Noah*	*1'41"*
5	Prelude Three: *The Flood*	*1'22"*
6	Fugue Three: *Noah's Ark*	*2'14"*
7	Prelude Four: *The Departure of Abraham*	*0'57"*
8	Fugue Four: *Abraham and Isaac*	*0'47"*
9	Prelude Five: *The Burning Bush*	*3'02"*
10	Fugue Five: *Moses*	*1'04"*
11	Prelude Six: *Saul and David*	*1'47"*
12	Fugue Six: *King David*	*2'59"*

BOOK TWO (OLD TESTAMENT)

13	Prelude Seven: *Job*	*0'43"*
14	Fugue Seven: *The Book of Proverbs*	*1'09"*
15	Prelude Eight: *The Little Book of Psalms (1)*	*2'41"*
16	Fugue Eight: *The Little Book of Psalms (2)*	*3'59"*
17	Prelude Nine: *Ecclesiasticus*	*2'37"*
18	Fugue Nine: *The Song of Songs*	*1'01"*
19	Prelude Ten: *Elijah*	*4'04"*
20	Fugue Ten: *Elisha*	*2'39"*
21	Prelude Eleven: *The Lamentations of Jeremiah*	*1'21"*
22	Fugue Eleven: *Jeremiah*	*1'03"*
23	Prelude Twelve: *Isaiah (1)*	*1'57"*
24	Fugue Twelve: *Isaiah (2)*	*2'36"*

BOOK THREE (NEW TESTAMENT)
'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us'
(Gospel of St. John 1:14)

25	Prelude Thirteen	*1'46"*
26	Fugue Thirteen	*1'19"*
27	Prelude Fourteen	*2'14"*
28	Fugue Fourteen	*1'11"*
29	Prelude Fifteen	*1'15"*
30	Fugue Fifteen	*1'33"*
31	Prelude Sixteen	*1'54"*
32	Fugue Sixteen	*0'30"*
33	Prelude Seventeen	*0'56"*
34	Fugue Seventeen	*2'07"*
35	Prelude Eighteen: *(Aria) The Seven Last Words of Jesus Christ on the Cross*	*2'19"*
36	Fugue Eighteen	*0'42"*

BOOK FOUR (NEW TESTAMENT)
Landscapes of the Lamb

37	Fugue Nineteen	*0'52"*
38	Postlude Nineteen	*0'40"*
39	Fugue Twenty	*0'50"*
40	Postlude Twenty	*0'44"*
41	Fugue Twenty One	*0'50"*
42	Postlude Twenty One	*0'40"*
43	Fugue Twenty Two	*0'55"*
44	Postlude Twenty Two *(Consonance)*	*0'31"*
45	Fugue Twenty Three	*0'27"*
46	Postlude Twenty Three *(Consonance)*	*0'28"*
47	Parallel Fugue and Postlude Twenty Four *(Unison)*	*4'05"*

Total playing time: 76'16"

Recorded in the Music Room, Champs Hill, 6th, 7th, 12th & 13th August 2009
Produced & engineered by David Lefeber

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PAVEL ZEMEK NOVÁK - 24 PRELUDES & FUGUES

As a composer, Pavel Zemek Novák has a completely individual voice. His music grows out of several distinctive traditions. First, there is his grounding in the folk music of his native Moravia. His mother was born in the small village of Mistřice in southern Moravia, near the border with Slovakia, while his father grew up nearby. Novák visited the area, which he has described as 'truly magical', every week as a child and was immersed in the distinctive sounds of Moravian folk music, a living tradition there, with its own melodic shapes and rhythms. Next, Novák studied composition in Janáček's home town of Brno with Miloslav Ištvan, who had been taught by Janáček's pupil Jaroslav Kvapil and had inherited the Janácek legacy, which in terms of compositional method is essentially one of building large forms from tiny motifs derived from folksong or Moravian speech patterns. At that time, during the 1970s, Brno was largely isolated from Western European influences, and Novák was not thoroughly exposed to these until he obtained a British Council grant to travel to London in 1993. He stayed for three months, studied with George Benjamin, and heard a lot of new music. A few years later he went to Paris for further study with Gérard Grisey. The result of this mature education was that, back in Brno, where he still lives with his family and teaches at the Conservatoire, Novák can maintain an independent and wide-ranging stance, freed from the insular mentality of 'the largest village in the world', as he has called Brno, yet maintaining strong links with its culture and traditions. He is also a devout Roman Catholic, and his music reflects his religious feelings as much as Messiaen's did.

Novák's music is truly modern in Eliot's sense that it adds something completely new to what has existed before. At the same time it is not radical; it does not seek to destroy the existing order and replace it with something new, as the Darmstadt composers wished to do. Novák retains strong links with tonality, but his tonality, with its frequent use of triads, sounds like no-one else's. He is also fond of quotations from other composers. 'Robbery! It inspires me', he has said. 'When I have let's say an hour of music written down it is interesting to freshen it up with something composed by someone else…What these borrowed fragments bring to my music is difference (disparity, divergence) and it is important that I manage to find the most natural way of incorporating them.' As we shall see, there is a considerable amount of quotation in the *24 Preludes and Fugues*. He is fond of extreme dynamics, and much of his music is very quiet and still. His sense of rhythm is complex and subtle, and there is an exhilarating dynamism in his fast music.

The *24 Preludes and Fugues* were written for William Howard over a 17-year period and reflect the evolution of Novák's musical language during this time. Many of them were premiered over the years at the Dartington International Summer School (including the third and fourth books). The first complete performance was given by William Howard in Brno in September 2007, and the first London performance at St. Giles, Cripplegate in December the same year.

The 75-minute work is divided into four books, the first two based on the Old Testament and the second two on the New. The 12 Old Testament preludes and 12 fugues all have individual titles, beginning with 'The Creation of Heaven and Earth' and 'The Creation of Man' and ending with two movements called 'Isaiah'. Creation is presented with elemental simplicity, a mostly two-part prelude followed by a one-part fugue. Novák's fugues are highly unusual: they display a novel and powerful approach to the old Baroque form, being mostly free from counterpoint. There are very few places where the texture is recognizably fugal in the traditional sense. Certain conventions are adhered to: characteristically, a subject – often a harmonized entity – will be repeated a fifth higher, but the subject itself may be hard to identify. The sixth fugue, 'King David', is the most extreme of all these fugues: prefaced by an *Introitus*, the fugue consists of only seven notes – a one-note subject, which is repeated a fifth higher; two notes for the development and three (the first two notes plus one other) for the recapitulation, all *fff*. *Book Two* is closer than *Book One* to the prelude and fugue archetype: a number of the pieces are deliberately based on the music of Scarlatti, and Fugue no.7 for the first time has very audible two-part imitation. Later on there are references to Bach and Beethoven: Prelude no.10, 'Elijah', consists of a theme derived from Mendelssohn's oratorio of the same name and five variations modelled on the second movement of Beethoven's op.111 Sonata.

These references to other composers are analogous to the development of society that the Old Testament reveals, as the world becomes peopled and more sophisticated.

Whereas the pieces in the first two books are distinct and unconnected, the cycle now strives increasingly towards a unity of form as it develops, while at the same time revealing Novák's growing interest in unison and consonance in his compositional language. The two New Testament books are shorter and are differently planned: they have overall rather than separate titles, and are conceived more as two continuous pieces. *Book Three* is entitled (from *St. John's Gospel*) 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us' and is also based on a quotation from St. Luke ('And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God'). Although Novák still divides the pieces into preludes and fugues they are best heard as a set of variations, the theme being Prelude no.13. *Book Three* culminates in a single-voiced setting of the *Seven Last Words of Christ*, with the text written into the score. For some time now Novák has been writing pieces that are more or less entirely in unison, with contrasts derived only from different registers and dynamics. *Book Four*, 'Landscapes of the Lamb', abandoning the prelude and fugue structure in favour of short fugues followed by shorter postludes, largely employs this unison method in the fugues, which are mostly in fast tempi. The opening *Fugue and Postlude* introduces strongly contrasted music, which is developed in the subsequent numbers to achieve unity in *Fugue and Postlude no.23*. The culminating 'Parallel Fugue and Postlude' is a *moto perpetuo* in continuous semiquavers which quotes the subjects of all 23 preceding fugues in turn, supplying a new one of its own in the final bars, and thus bringing unity to the contrasted elements of the whole cycle.

I have no doubt that these 24 *Preludes and Fugues* are one of the finest piano works of our time, a worthy companion to Ligeti's three books of *Études*, with which they have something in common, though the atheist Ligeti's strongly secular tone is in stark contrast to the intense spirituality of Novák's music.

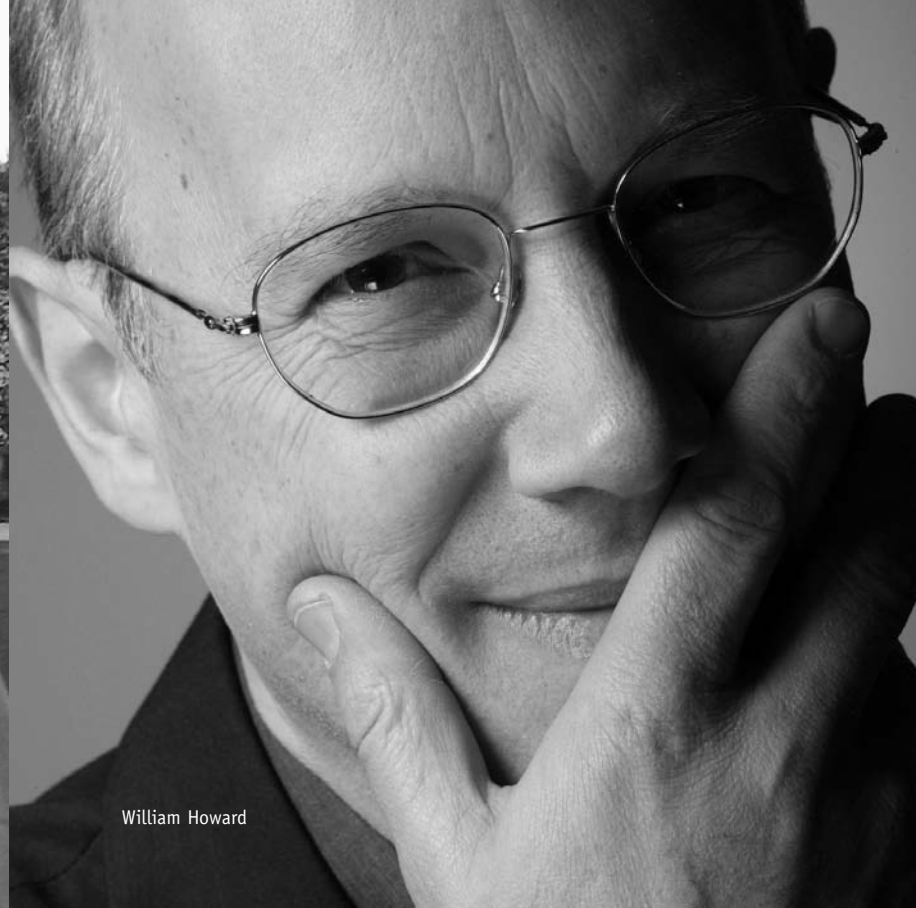
David Matthews

PAVEL ZEMEK NOVÁK

Pavel Novák, who is known as Pavel Zemek in the Czech Republic to avoid confusion with other composers named Novák, was born in 1957 in Brno, the second city of the Czech Republic, and studied with Miloslav Ištvan, a fine Brno composer who regarded Novák as his star pupil. He played principal oboe in the opera orchestra of the Brno National Theatre before giving it up to concentrate on composition.

One of the most individual and distinctive Czech composers of his generation, Novák has written a large body of symphonic, choral, chamber and instrumental works that reflect both his devout religious faith and his interest in Moravian folk traditions. Among his most significant works is his Symphony no.2 *St. John Passion*, which won a Janáček Foundation prize in 1998. His Symphony no.3 for solo piano and string orchestra was premiered at the 2005 Dartington International Summer School, which also commissioned a further work for soprano, trumpet and organ in 2007. His Symphony no.5 received first prize in a competition to mark the 50th anniversary of the Brno State Philharmonic Orchestra in 2004. He has written several important works for the Schubert Ensemble, which have been performed around the world and in leading UK venues. His piano quintet *Funeral Procession on Iona* (1995) and his piano quartet *Marian Variations* (2000) were performed by the Schubert Ensemble in a 50th Birthday Concert for Pavel Novák at the South Bank Centre in London in November 2007. He has also written for the Composers Ensemble and for Chroma and has contributed to the Associated Board's *Spectrum* series of contemporary piano pieces. His Sixth String Quartet, *Bells of Light*, was premiered by the Hawthorne Quartet, members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, at the 2009 Prague Spring Festival, as the result of a special commission from the Terezin Chamber Music Foundation. It was written in memory of the Brno-born composer Pavel Haas who spent several years in Terezin and died in Auschwitz. A 60-minute work for solo percussion, *L'Adoration du Sacré Cœur*, will be premiered in Brno Cathedral in 2012. Novák has been working for some years on a large-scale setting of the *St. Mark Passion* for three choirs and three orchestras, which, with his characteristic sense of humour, he says is 'for performance in Heaven'; he has also recently begun a *St. Luke Passion*.

Pavel Zemek Novák



William Howard

WILLIAM HOWARD

William Howard is established as one of Britain's leading pianists, enjoying a career that has taken him to over 40 different countries. His performing life consists of solo recitals, concerto performances, guest appearances with chamber ensembles and instrumentalists, and regular touring with the Schubert Ensemble of London, Britain's leading group for piano and strings and winners of the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Best Chamber Ensemble. He can be heard on over 30 CDs, released by Chandos, Hyperion, ASV, NMC, Collins Classics and Black Box.

His solo career has taken him to many of Britain's most important festivals, including Bath, Brighton and Cheltenham, and he has been artist in residence at several others. He has performed many times in the Wigmore Hall and the South Bank in London and has broadcast regularly for BBC Radio 3. For many years he has been invited to perform and teach at the Dartington International Summer School. His recording of Dvořák Piano Works was selected in the *Gramophone* Critics' Choice, and his recording of Fibich's *Moods, Impressions and Souvenirs* won a Diapason D'Or award in France.

He is passionate about 19th-century piano repertoire, especially Schubert, Chopin, Schumann and Fauré. He also has a strong interest in Czech piano music, and has been particularly acclaimed for his performance of Janáček, for which he received a medal from the Czech Minister of Culture in 1986. Many leading composers of the present day have written for him, including Sally Beamish, Petr Eben, Piers Hellawell, David Matthews, Pavel Novák, Anthony Powers, Howard Skempton and Judith Weir.

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Schubert Ensemble
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Brahms was a master of delivering emotional impact, amply demonstrated here with the solo piano Intermezzi played by William Howard. The remarkable textural complexity of these works is evident, too, in the Piano Quintet. Fraught with indecision and introspection, this work is delivered an assured and expressive performance by the Schubert Ensemble.

"listened to this CD again today, and it is one terrific recording... There is an absolute majesty in this performance that I have not encountered elsewhere..."
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"... a most touching reading..."
Gramophone Magazine