



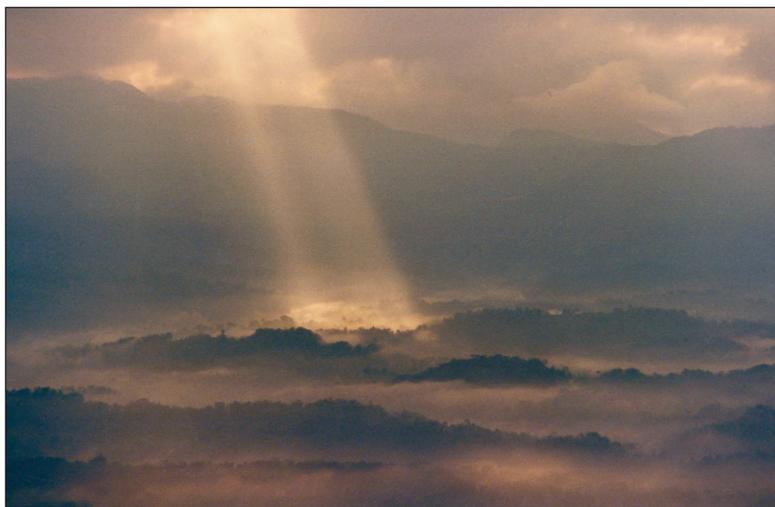
THE LOST CITY

Lamentations Through the Ages

Sospiri • Christopher Watson

Susanna Fairbairn and Miranda Laurence, Sopranos

Robert Vanryne, Trumpet



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Lamentations Through the Ages

In the summer of 2011 Sospiri travelled down to Roujan, in the south of France, to record a series of choral settings of the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*. We had discussed the project at length, and decided on a mixture of ancient and modern settings that would give a sense of the many different approaches to the text by composers over the centuries.

The *Book of Lamentations* is a poetic text of the Hebrew Bible traditionally ascribed to the prophet Jeremiah. It mourns the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple in the sixth century BC; but it is also part of a literary history that goes back several thousand years; a history of 'city laments' which, in an outpouring of sorrow, details the destruction of human settlements by natural disasters or man-made events. The story of Jeremiah, seeking solitude to grieve the terrible loss of Jerusalem, is described in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel fresco and Rembrandt's *Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem*.

As with so many biblical texts, the *Book of Lamentations* has a resonance that stretches far beyond the time of its writing. Today, the number of displaced people is on the increase, whether through war, famine or drought; and the yearning for a city – real or imagined – is as potent as it has ever been.

In the liturgy the texts are spoken or sung during Holy Week, in the days preceding Easter Sunday. The powerful images of darkness, desolation and confusion become a prophetic metaphor, linking Christ's betrayal, arrest and crucifixion with the destruction of the Holy City hundreds of years previously. From the sixteenth century, composers have chosen verses from *Lamentations* and set them polyphonically, as with Victoria's *Tenebrae Responses* and Tallis's *Lamentations*. Sometimes they serve a strictly liturgical function as antiphons and responses, other times, as with John Mundy's set on this disc, they have a more political agenda, drawing parallels between the destruction of Jerusalem and the schisms in the Catholic church brought about by the Reformation. When a composer sets several verses together, the

following elements are frequently added:

An opening announcement: *Incipit Lamentatio Jeremiae Prophetiae* (The Lamentation of Jeremiah the Prophet begins)

A Hebrew letter at the head of each verse
The concluding refrain: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum* (Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God) taken from *Hosea 14:1*.

Our recording opens with Cecilia McDowall's *The Lord is Good*. I met Cecilia at the ACDA conference in Chicago in the spring of 2011. I was enthusing about Sospiri, and telling Cecilia of our plans to make a recording of *Lamentations*. I tentatively suggested that she might like to consider writing something for the disc, expecting to hear how busy she was ... but, instead, she said, 'I'd love to!' A couple of months later a score appeared in my in-tray, via her publisher, OUP. We were absolutely delighted with the work the moment we began rehearsing it.

The verses have been chosen to capture the essence of penitence, supplication and longing which are so characteristic of the biblical text; and this is modulated by a strand of hope, so that there is a beautiful, shifting balance between desolation and expectation. The music moves from slow-moving homophonic passages to restless polyphony and back again, as simple, concordant harmonies contrast with piquant, arid clashes. Over this, two solo soprano voices weave a mellifluous line, with distinctive, middle-eastern overtones, illuminating the struggle of an exiled people.

The Lord is Good was shortlisted for a BASCA award in 2012.

Jerusalem

The Lord is good unto them that wait for him,
to the soul that seeketh him.

It is good that a man should both hope

and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke
of his youth.

For the Lord will not cast off for ever:

But though he cause grief, yet will he have
compassion according to the multitude of his
mercies.

For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve
the children of men.

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere
ad Dominum Deum tuum*

One of the most frequently set of the *Lamentations* verses is 1:16. It is one of the most heart-rending and piteous verses of all, and appears in various forms on the disc.

O vos omnes qui transitis per viam,

attendite et videte:

Si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus.

Attendite, universi populi, et videte dolorem meum.

Si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus.

(Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?

Behold, and see:

If there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.

Behold, all ye people, and witness my sorrow.

If there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.)

The second track is a rich, emotive setting by the brilliant cellist, Pablo Casals, which creates a dialogue between different voice pairings and full choir, and ends, as it begins, with a hushed iteration of the opening line.

The eighth track, a setting by the Argentinian composer Pablo Ortiz, shimmers like a mirage. Chords gently overlap and morph one into the other, before racing to a brief climax and dropping back down to a hazy whisper.

In the fourth track, on the other hand, Britten uses a mid-fourteenth century English variant – typically spiky and dramatic in style, with perfectly judged dissonances and swiftly changing dynamics. The piece is the seventh in his collection *Sacred and Profane*.

Ye that pasen by the weie,

Abidet a little stounde.

Beholdet, all my felawes,

Yef any me lik is founde.

To the tre with nailles thre

Wol fast I hange bounde;

With a spere all thoru my side

To mine herte is mad a wounde.

In the tenth track Ralph Vaughan Williams sets verses 12–14. Most of the work is for upper voices only, with homophonic, modal cascades contrasting with a solo alto voice. There follows a magical climax: the hushed voices of tenors and basses are heard for the first time – in A major – singing the word *Jerusalem*. In contrast, the upper voices answer in the distant key of F minor, before the full choir builds to a glorious reiteration of *Jerusalem*, moving through a sequence of keys to rest once more in A major.

LAMED. O vos omnes qui transitis per viam attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus quoniam vindemiavit me ut locutus est Dominus in die irae furoris sui

MEM. De excelso misit ignem in ossibus meis et erudit me expandit rete pedibus meis convertit me retrorsum posuit me desolatam tota die maerore confectam

NUN. Vigilavit iugum iniquitatum mearum in manu eius convolutae sunt et inpositae collo meo infirmata est virtus mea dedit me Dominus in manu de qua non potero surgere
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum

(Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevailed against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day.

The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand:

they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall, the Lord hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up.
Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God.)

In the wonderful double-choir setting by Dominique Phinot, (Track 3), he sets the first eight verses of Book V of the *Lamentations*. In the *Incipit*, and the first two verses, the two choirs trade phrases in a predominantly homophonic style, coming together in rich, sonorous tutti at section ends. Then, in verses 3 and 4, the upper voices weave a beautiful contrapuntal texture, which is taken up by the lower voices in verses 5 and 6. The final two verses return to a largely homophonic style. In verse 7, both choirs come together in a luxuriant tutti, and verse 8 returns to a more antiphonal style. Similarly, the final invocation, *Jerusalem, Jerusalem...*, begins antiphonally, but the two choirs rapidly begin to overlap, joining together for the climactic closing phrases.

*Recordare Domine, quid acciderit nobis;
intuere et respice opprobrium nostrum.
Hæreditas nostra versa est ad alienos,
domus nostræ ad extraneos.
Pupilli facti sumus absque patre,
matres nostræ quasi viduæ.
Aquam nostram pecunia bibimus;
ligna nostra pretio comparavimus.
Cervicibus nostris minabamur,
lassis non dabatur requies.
Ægypto dedimus manum et Assyriis,
ut saturaremur pane.
Patres nostri peccaverunt, et non sunt:
et nos iniquitates eorum portavimus.
Servi dominati sunt nostri:
non fuit qui redimeret de manu eorum.*

(Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens.
We are orphans and fatherless,

our mothers are as widows.
We have drunken our water for money;
our wood is sold unto us.
Our necks are under persecution:
we labour, and have no rest.
We have given the hand to the Egyptians,
and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.
Our fathers have sinned, and are not;
and we have borne their iniquities.
Servants have ruled over us:
there is none that doth deliver us out of their hand.)

For my setting, I picked three verses from the first book of Lamentations, and decided to follow convention: to begin with the *Incipit*; to preface each verse with Hebrew letters (*Aleph, Beth, Gimel*); and to conclude with the line from *Hosea* (14:1). I also decided to use the English translation from the King James Bible because we were in the midst of celebrating the 400th anniversary of its publication.

I was delighted when I found out that the trumpet player, Robert Vanryne, would be accompanying the choir to France. I imagined that the trumpet could provide a new voice that would shift the sound of the choir – and my thinking – into a different realm. I love the work of the trumpet player, Jon Hassell, who has championed an unconventional style of playing built around a mesmerising, soft, breathy timbre, largely in the lower register of the instrument. I did not realise how difficult it can be to control the trumpet in this register, but Robert delivered a wonderful performance, making the part his own.

I imagined the Hebrew letters like those in medieval manuscripts, where the first letter is ornately elaborated and decorated. They are static, architectural and contemplative.

Hear this: The Lamentation of Jeremiah the Prophet begins
Aleph. How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!
Beth. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold,

and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.
Gimel. For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum

Our recording concludes with the motet *Wie liegt die Stadt so wüst* by Rudolf Mauersberger. He served for over forty years as music director of Dresden's historic Kreuzkirche and as leader of the church's renowned boys' choir, the Dresdner Kreuzchor. This motet was written at the end of World War II in response to the Allied fire-bombing of Dresden, which claimed the lives of over 25,000 people (including eleven young choristers from the Kreuzchor) and destroyed one of Germany's greatest cities.
Mauersberger weaves together several non-sequential verses from *Lamentations* to produce a unique and highly charged lament for his devastated city.

*Wie liegt die Stadt so wüst, die voll Volks war.
Alle ihre Tore stehen öde.
Wie liegen die Steine des Heiligtums
vorn auf allen Gassen zerstreut.
Er hat ein Feuer aus der Höhe
in meine Gebeine gesandt und es lassen walten.*

*Ist das die Stadt, von der man sagt,
sie sei die allerschönste, der sich
das ganze Land freuet?*

*Sie hätte nicht gedacht,
daß es ihr zuletzt so gehen würde;
sie ist ja zu greulich heruntergestoßen
und hat dazu niemand, der sie tröstet.*

*Darum ist unser Herz betrübt
und unsere Augen sind finster geworden:
Warum willst du unser so gar vergessen
und uns lebenslang so gar verlassen!*

*Bringe uns, Herr, wieder zu dir,
daß wir wieder heimkommen!
Erneue unsere Tage wie vor alters.
Herr, siehe an mein Elend!*

(How lonely sits the city that was full of people!
All her gates are desolate.
How the stones of her sanctuary lie
Scattered at the head of every street.
He sent fire from on high;
into my bones he made it descend.

Is this the city which was called
the most beautiful, that in which
the whole land rejoices?

She had not thought
that this would be her final end;
therefore her fall is terrible,
and she has no one to comfort her.

This is why our heart has become sick,
These things have caused our eyes to grow dim.
Why do you forget us for ever,
why do you so long forsake us?

Bring us, O Lord, back to you,
that we come home again!
Renew our days as of old.
O Lord, behold my affliction!)

John Duggan

*Many thanks to Joseph Koczera, S.J. for his help
with the Mauersberger notes and translation*

Susanna Fairbairn



Susanna Fairbairn studied music at Magdalen College, Oxford, with an instrumental scholarship on the flute. After a year as a Lay Vicar Choral at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, and a master-class with Emma Kirkby, she changed direction and went on to study as a soprano at Trinity College of Music, winning the English Song Competition, the Wilfred Greenhouse Allt Prize and the Paul Simm Opera Prize. Solo, consort and opera work now takes her worldwide. Highlights as a soloist include Handel's *Israel in Egypt* at Cadogan Hall for John Eliot Gardiner, Mozart's *C Minor Mass* with Sian Edwards, the *St John Passion* in Symphony Hall with Ex Cathedra, Taverner's *The Veil of the Temple* in Canterbury Cathedral in the presence of the composer, and an appearance singing *O Holy Night* for BBC1 on Christmas Day 2010. Operatic rôles include Lady Billows in *Albert Herring* (directed by Steuart Bedford), Armida in *Rinaldo* (directed by Nicholas Kraemer) and Agrippina in a new work *Fragments of Sun* by Litha Efthymiou at the Tête à Tête Opera Festival 2012. She is a 2013 Park Lane Young Artist. susannafairbairn.com

Miranda Laurence



Miranda Laurence is a project manager working in the arts. She has sung with choirs and ensembles in Oxford (including Sospiri, Magdala, and Commotio), Cambridge (including Cambridgeshire County Youth Choir, Cambridge Chorale) and Berlin (including Voces Novae), and has recorded with Commotio, Magdala and Sospiri.

Robert Vanryne



Born in Hertfordshire, the trumpeter Robert Vanryne became a finalist at the age of fifteen in the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition. After completing a music degree at Royal Holloway College he continued his studies on the trumpet as a postgraduate at the Royal College of Music with Michael Laird. He has both performed and recorded regularly with Europe's leading period instrument ensembles as well as with modern orchestras throughout the United Kingdom. He is also an instrument maker, specialising in the reproduction of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century trumpets which are currently played by many of the world's leading musicians. With the Kölner Akademie under the direction of Michael Alexander Willens he has recorded previously unrecorded pieces for early chromatic trumpet, including works composed for various types of valve-trumpet, keyed-trumpet and cornet. Recorded exclusively on historical instruments, either built or renovated in his own workshop, the recording features unusual works by Giuseppe Verdi, Leopold Kozeluch and Conradin Kreutzer.

Sospiri

Sospiri was founded in 2006 by Christopher Watson and John Duggan after they met singing in Magdala, the inspirational ensemble run by David Skinner at Magdalen College, Oxford. The choir sings regularly in service and in concert both in Britain and abroad and has made five recordings, including two for The Gift of Music label. Under the tutelage of the directors, Sospiri specialises in performing plainsong and has built up a large and diverse repertoire from Byrd to Britten together with newly commissioned works. Recent commissions include a substantial collection of new pieces for the centenary commemorations of World War I by some of the leading names in contemporary choral music. Uniquely, Sospiri is run by a composer and a professional singer, whose shared experiences provide a dynamic and diverse atmosphere in which to make music. This is their first recording for Naxos. www.sospiri.co.uk

Christopher Watson



Christopher Watson studied music at Exeter University. He sang in the cathedral choirs of Exeter, Durham, Christ Church Oxford and Westminster and since 2005 has been based in Oxford, working as a freelance singer and conductor. He is a member of The Tallis Scholars, with whom he has made more than 300 appearances, Theatre of Voices, Gallicantus and Tenebrae and is much in demand as a soloist, particularly in the Passions of J.S. Bach. As a conductor he directs the chamber choir Sospiri with John Duggan, has conducted the Coro Casa di Música of Porto and is Director of Music at St Edmund Hall, one of the colleges of Oxford University. chriswatsonenor.com

Photograph: Eric Richmond



La Maison Verte by Eloise Coyle

Soprano: Susanna Fairbairn, Lydia Gregory, Kate Hicks, Joy Krishnamoorthy, Miranda Laurence, Nadia Rowntree
Alto: Helen Burn, Jenny Davis, Rosemary Golding, Rupert Griffin, Camilla Stack
Tenor: William Blake, John Duggan, Kenneth Garbett, James Martin, Benedict Millinchip, Jonathan Stökl, Christopher Watson
Bass: Dominic Bevan, John Cotterill, Stephen Garner, Michael Geary, Ed Rowntree, Francis Steele
Trumpet: Robert Vanryne

Thanks to:

Père Peytavi and his team, the Mairie of Roujan, Anne Roberts & Francis Steele, Lisa Gartell & Toby Cutler, Michele Crawford, Cecilia McDowall, Pablo Ortiz, Stephen Rice, Robert Vanryne, Susanna Fairbairn, Eloise Coyle, Geoff Deckland and Joseph Koczera, S.J.
 Carte Blanche Cuisine: Lisa Gartell, Toby Cutler, Michele Crawford

Publishers: OUP (New Horizons) (1); Tetra Music (2); Ed. Stephen Rice (3); Faber Music (4); John Duggan (5-7); Theatre of Voices Edition (8); Edited and reconstructed by Francis Steele (9); Curwen (10); Edition Mauersberger (11)

The Lamentations of Jeremiah may be unremittingly sad, but they have had a deep resonance for composers throughout the ages. This is a collection that reflects that diversity – from John Mundy’s setting, which highlights the grave concern over schisms in the Catholic Church of the sixteenth century, through to Rudolph Mauersberger’s motet, which mourns the destruction of the city of Dresden in 1945. Two new pieces were commissioned especially for this project, and are recorded here for the first time: John Duggan’s haunting set of three *Lamentations* for choir, trumpet and solo soprano; and Cecilia McDowall’s exotic and powerful *The Lord is Good*, which was shortlisted for a BASCA award in 2012.

THE LOST CITY

Lamentations Through the Ages

1	Cecilia McDOWALL (b. 1951): <i>The Lord is Good</i> ^{1,2}	5:45
2	Pablo CASALS (1876–1973): <i>O vos omnes</i>	3:35
3	Dominique PHINOT (c. 1510–c. 1556): <i>Lamentations</i>	11:22
4	Benjamin BRITTEN (1913–1976): <i>Ye that pasen by</i> (No. 7 from <i>Sacred and Profane, Op. 91</i>) John DUGGAN (b. 1963):	2:00
5	<i>Lamentation I</i> ^{2,3}	6:13
6	<i>Lamentation II</i> ^{2,3}	4:01
7	<i>Lamentation III</i> ^{2,3}	5:40
8	Pablo ORTIZ (b. 1956): <i>O vos omnes</i> (No. 2 from <i>5 Motets</i>)	1:45
9	John MUNDY (c. 1555–1630): <i>De Lamentatione Jeremiae</i> (Edited and reconstructed by Francis Steele)	9:49
10	Ralph VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958): <i>O vos omnes</i>	5:38
11	Rudolf MAUERSBERGER (1889–1971): <i>Wie liegt die Stadt so wüst</i>	6:37

Miranda Laurence¹ and Susanna Fairbairn², Sopranos
 Robert Vanryne, Trumpet³
 Sospiri • Christopher Watson

Recorded at Eglise St Laurent, Roujan, Languedoc-Roussillon, from 9th to 12th August 2011
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