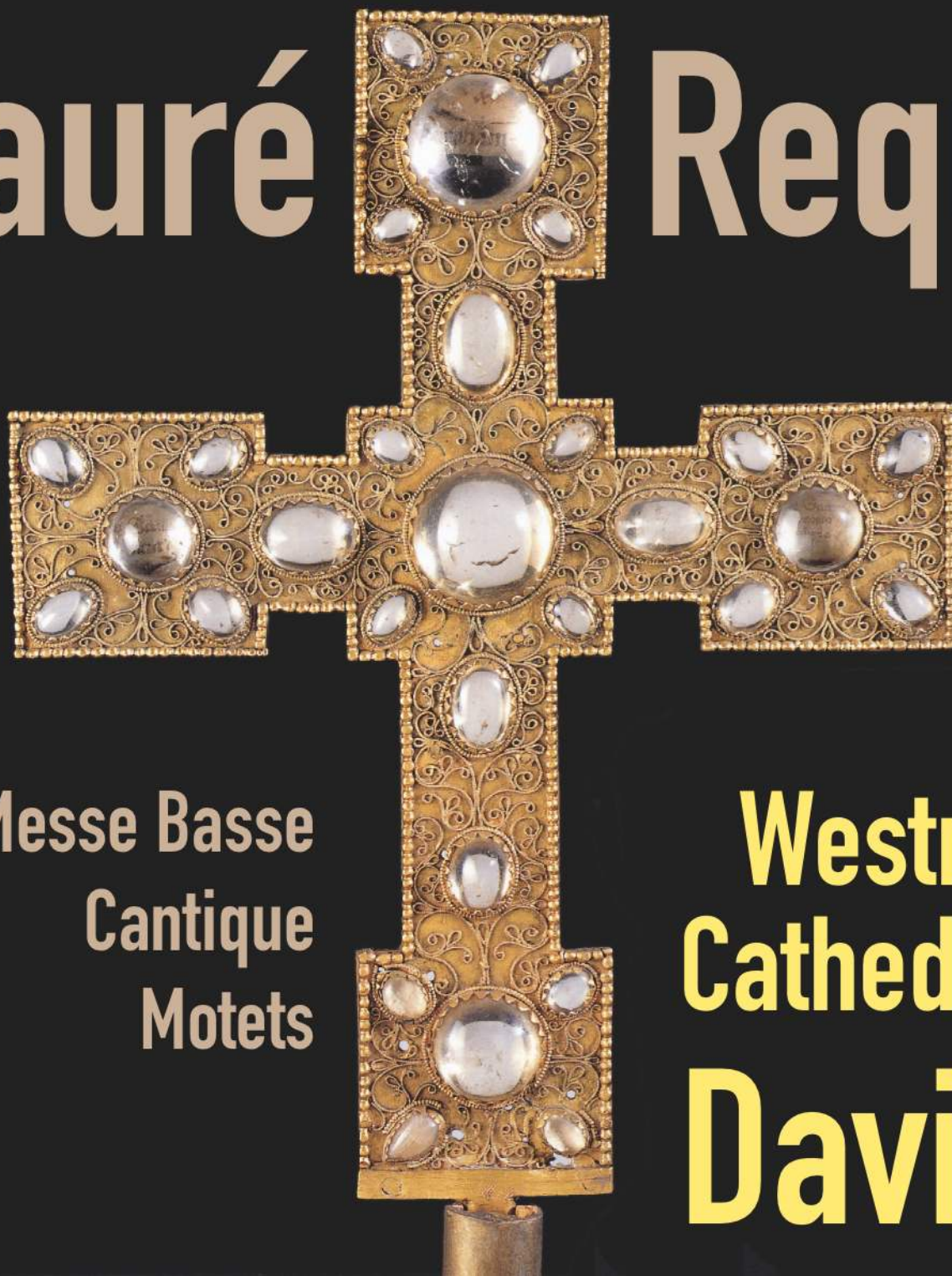


# Fauré

# Requiem



Messe Basse  
Cantique  
Motets

Westminster  
Cathedral Choir  
David Hill

*alto*

# Gabriel Fauré

## *Requiem, Op. 48*

[1]	Introit et Kyrie	6:37
[2]	Offertoire	8:23
[3]	Sanctus	3:08
[4]	Pie Jesu	3:15
[5]	Agnus Dei	6:09
[6]	Libera me	4:41
[7]	In paradisum	3:45

[8]	<i>Cantique de Jean Racine</i>	5:29
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[9]	<i>Tantum Ergo, Op. 65 No. 2</i>	2:51
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## *Messe Basse*

[10]	Kyrie	2:20
[11]	Sanctus	2:24
[12]	Benedictus	2:30
[13]	Agnus Dei	3:07

[14]	<i>Maria Mater gratiae, Op. 47 No. 2</i>	2:38
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Aidan Oliver & Harry Escott, *trebles* ([4])

David Wilson-Johnson, *baritone* ([2], [6])

Westminster Cathedral Choir ([1]-[7], [9]-[14])

City of London Sinfonia ([1]-[7])

David Hill, *conductor* ([1]-[7], [9]-[14])

Choir of St. John's College Cambridge ([8])

Christopher Robinson, *conductor* ([8])

## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The works of **Gabriel Fauré** (1845-1924) were slow to become part of the popular repertoire and his best known composition today, the *Requiem*, was scarcely known until some years after his death (despite the advocacy of a number of musicians, notably Nadia Boulanger). For many years he was choirmaster and then organist at La Madeleine in Paris and in 1896 he became professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire. He was Director of the Conservatoire from 1905 until 1920, and his pupils there included Ravel, Nadia Boulanger, Enescu, Florent Schmitt and Charles Koechlin. He was also music critic for *Le Figaro* between 1903 and 1921. He is now acknowledged to be one of the finest composers of his day and his piano works, songs, and chamber music are particularly highly regarded.

His own training at the Ecole Niedermeyer, where he was sent at the age of nine, virtually guaranteed that his first works should be of a religious nature, for that institution specialised in training church musicians. One of Fauré's earliest posts was as a teacher at the Ecole Niedermeyer and it was whilst thus engaged that he composed the earliest work on this disc, the *Cantique de Jean Racine*, which stylistically owes much to Gounod and Mendelssohn. Fauré originally scored the work for choir with harmonium and string accompaniment and in 1865 dedicated it to César Franck. It is now more familiar with an organ accompaniment and its pure and refined dedication makes it a popular work with cathedral choirs. Jean Racine (1639 - 99) was of course one of the greatest of French tragic dramatists who late in life turned to writing theological texts.

The *Messe basse* is for boy's voices only. It is scored for divided trebles and a treble soloist with an organ accompaniment and was composed in about 1880 although published considerably later in 1907. Since Fauré chose not to set the *Gloria* and *Credo* sections of the Mass (only the *Kyrie*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* appear in this work), this becomes an essentially lyrical and non-dramatic work anticipating the style of his opera *Pénélope*, his songs and most famously, his *Requiem*. There are however some daring and unexpected harmonies.

*Maria, Mater gratiae* is the second of two Offertories forming his Opus 47 composed in 1887, the same year as the *Pavane*. It is for two voices (treble and baritone) and organ. Another Offertory, *Tantum Ergo* (Opus 65/2) for three-part treble chorus with solos, composed in 1894, is also included in this collection.

At the time when Fauré sketched most of the *Requiem* (1887/8) he had been at La Madeleine for ten ALC 1078 Booklet.indd 4-6 years. He composed it, as he said, 'for no reason at all...for pleasure if I say so', although the fact that he lost both of his parents between 1885-8 must have been a contributing factor to producing this type of work at that particular time. It was completed in

1893 and published in piano score in 1900, with the orchestral score coming out the following year. What had been completed in 1888 was performed in that year at La Madeleine and Fauré directed the finished piece later several times as part of the Liturgy. Contrast with other 19th century *Requiems* could hardly be greater: this is a work noted for its open-textured writing for the choir and its essential gentleness. There is no sense of terror at the day of judgement, just a resigned and relatively relaxed anticipation of eternal rest; indeed the *Requiem* seems to be dominated by the word 'requiem' (rest). Of other such works composed around this time it perhaps most resembles the sacred works of Dvořák and more recently the Duruflé *Requiem*. The orchestral forces used also serve to underline the work's rather subdued tones for it consists mainly of violas and cellos *divisi*, with double bass support and with the organ serving as continuo. There are occasional parts for horns and trumpets and the harp plays in three of the seven movements. This concentration of lower instruments makes the discreet violin entry in the *Sanctus* all the more effective.

The opening movement *Introit* features a melody of falling fourths and thirds over a barely discernible marching bass. The *Offertorium* is largely canonic with instrumental chords of the seventh adding colour to passages sung in unison by the choir. The baritone solo in this movement is almost monotonal. Fauré asserts his independence over other nineteenth century composers in his setting of the *Sanctus*, showing an almost unheard of delicacy and gentleness. This is followed unusually by the *Pie Jesu* for solo treble, in which the emphasis on rest is provided by the gently rocking motion in intervals of a tone or minor third. The tenor unison line in the *Agnus Dei* is accompanied by a memorable string countermelody reminiscent of Bach. The middle section for full choir *Lux aeterna* with its comforting words ('*Let perpetual light shine upon them together with Thy saints for Thou art good*') provides the emotional centre of the entire work. The final two movements are not taken from the Mass for the Dead but rather from the Order of Burial. The first of these, *Libera me*, opens with a powerfully austere passage for baritone which anticipates the *Stabat Mater* of Poulenc. This magnificent passage is later repeated by the choir in unison. The final movement is the antiphon *In Paradisum* in which angelic treble voices to harp accompaniment bring the work to a restful close in utmost serenity. This blissful movement has been likened to the closing passage of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* known as the *Angel's Farewell*.

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## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

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**Westminster Cathedral Choir** is widely considered to be one of the finest choirs in the world. The establishment of a fine choral foundation was part of the original vision of the founder of Westminster Cathedral, Cardinal Herbert Vaughan. Vaughan laid great emphasis on the beauty and integrity of the new Cathedral's liturgy, and regarded a residential choir school as essential to the realisation of his vision. Daily sung Masses and Offices were immediately established when the Cathedral opened in 1903, and have continued without interruption ever since. Today, Westminster Cathedral Choir is the only professional Catholic choir in the world to sing daily Mass and Vespers.

Richard Terry, the Cathedral's first Master of Music, proved to be an inspired choice. Terry was both a brilliant choir trainer and a pioneering scholar, one of the first musicologists to revive the great works of the English and Continental Renaissance composers. Terry built Westminster Cathedral Choir's reputation on performances of music – by Byrd, Tallis, Taverner, Palestrina and Victoria, among others – that had not been heard since the 16th and 17th centuries, and Mass at the Cathedral was soon attended by inquisitive musicians as well as the faithful. The performance of great Renaissance masses and motets in their proper liturgical context remains the cornerstone of the choir's activity.

George Malcolm consolidated the musical reputation of Westminster Cathedral Choir during his time as Master of Music – in particular through the now legendary recording of Victoria's Tenebrae Responsories. More recent holders of the post have included Colin Mawby, Stephen Cleobury, David Hill and James O'Donnell. The choir continues to thrive since 2000 under the current Master of Music, Martin Baker.

When its duties at the Cathedral permit, the choir also gives concert performances at home and abroad and on radio & TV. It has appeared at many important festivals, including Aldeburgh, Cheltenham, Salzburg, Copenhagen, Bremen and Spitalfield and in many of the major concert halls of Britain, including the Royal Festival Hall, the Wigmore Hall and the Royal Albert Hall.

**Alto ALC1078**

**5055354410789**

Tracks 1-7 recorded at Westminster Cathedral, London, 1 February 1988

Tracks 8-14 recorded at St. Jude's, Hampstead, 7-9 December 1987

Producer: **Mark Brown**

Engineer: **Antony Howell**

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Track 8 recorded at St. John's College Chapel, June 1996

Producer & Engineer: **Tim Handley**

Mastered for alto by **Paul Arden-Taylor**

Reissue producer: **Robin Vaughan**

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