

Perhaps some of you will remember Nigel Osborne's contribution to the conference on "encountering our humanity" in Ottawa in August 2016. The Cambridge Music Conference featured two new commissions in an evening dedicated to "Rebuilding Our Humanity": "Women Are Gone" (2016) by Squamish Elder Wendy Charbonneau for the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and "Bar Elias Suite" (2016) by Nigel Osborne for piano, cello, oboe d'amore and eurythmy, which captured the lives of Syrian refugee children. Nigel Osborne's "The Tree of Life" (2020) is based on the experience of his therapeutic team in the refugee camp in Lebanon and is a sequel to "Bar Elias Suite" (2016). Theatre of Voices will be performing the UK premiere of "The Tree of Life" (2020) within the Cambridge Music Festival. "Music, Healing and Human Rights" is the theme of Elizabeth Carmack's upcoming Visiting Fellowship at the University of Cambridge and the 25th anniversary of the Cambridge Music Conference.

"Music, Healing and Human Rights"
Cambridge Music Conference 25th Anniversary Celebration
Elizabeth Carmack

Background and Development

The Cambridge Music Conference was inspired by my sister Catherine Carmack (1957-2003), whose illness prompted me to act quickly. We conceived of the Cambridge Music Conference in 2000 together. The success of the first conference in 2001 on "Music and Healing" involved the BBC World Service making a documentary. As a result, I was invited to the 2001 Michaelmas Conference at the Goetheanum, where the Cambridge Music Conference was recognised for communicating values and content associated with the First Class. In 2002, after the second conference on "The Harp: Music and Oral Tradition", our high aesthetic standards and artistic ideals were valued, which resulted in the Cambridge Music Conference being asked to join the Performing Arts Section at the Goetheanum. I was later informed that the Executive Council of the Anthroposophical Society had argued about which Section the Cambridge Music Conference should belong to. The Social Section acknowledged that my focus on music as a social art more effectively endorsed their concept of healing and value of the other. My article "Finding Truth through Others: The Value of Dialogical Thinking" (2001), published in *Anthroposophy Worldwide*, describes how people are keen to collaborate, despite their differences, thereby, making it possible to cultivate a variety of approaches in the Cambridge Music Conference. For the next event in 2003 on "Music and Philosophy", I was asked to include Rudolf Steiner's Blackboard Drawings and a new commission by the Rudolf Steiner Archive. Nigel Osborne's "Dialogue" (2003) was premiered by Jinny Shaw (oboe) and Lucy Wakeford (harp) at Michaelhouse in Cambridge, where I was responsible for the first exhibition of Rudolf Steiner's Blackboard Drawings in the UK. From 2000 to 2020 the Cambridge Music Conference ran fifteen events in England, Canada and Switzerland having commissioned and premiered over fifty new works of music dedicated to healing, transformation, compassion and humanity. "Music and Healing" involved four conferences in Cambridge. The first three were inspired by the advancements in neuroscience and the influence of music on the brain, with the last focusing on how music affects the health of the heart. "Music and the Grail" included three events at Rudolf Steiner House in London embracing three schools of thought and new music commissions for eurythmy involving Maren Stott and Ursula Zimmermann. "Music and Cultural Regeneration" took place mostly in Vancouver Canada encompassing seven events, that culminated in 2020 with a 100th anniversary concert celebrating my father's life and music as a composer by the Canadian Music Centre.

Theatre of Voices: Anniversary Concert

Theatre of Voices have been invited to perform a special anniversary concert dedicated to human rights. During the first three years of the Cambridge Music Conference in 2001, 2002 and 2003, Theatre of Voices were a special feature within the context of the Cambridge Summer Music Festival. The early development of the Cambridge Music Conference was greatly enriched by the annual concerts of Theatre of Voices. The upcoming concert on 27 February 2025 looks back to the opening concert of the Cambridge Music Conference on 17 July 2001, in which Theatre of Voices performed Arvo Pärt's "Berliner Messe" (1990). Commissioned by the Deutscher Katholikentage in Berlin in 1990, Theatre of Voices was invited to give the first performance, premiering the new work at the recommendation of the composer. Christopher Bowers-Broadbent returns as the organist for the "Berliner Messe" and will also perform "Walking Song" by Kevin Volans, whose cross cultural fertilization of ideas enriched Western

music with native aboriginal rhythms and motifs from South Africa. Another significant feature of the concert by Theatre of Voices is the UK premiere of Nigel Osborne's "The Tree of Life" (2020), which was composed for Rihab Azar (oud) and Theatre of Voices and commissioned by the Cambridge Music Conference.

Nigel Osborne's "The Tree of Life" (2020)

Nigel Osborne (2020) introduces the background and development of his therapeutic work with Syrian refugees, the source of inspiration at the heart of "The Tree of Life" (2020): "I have been working since 2015 in the Beqaa Valley in Lebanon on a therapeutic and educational music programme for Syrian children in refugee camps. I have the privilege of working for a wonderful young Lebanese/Syrian NGO called SAWA for Development and Aid. I recruited and trained a team of "workshop leaders" from among the refugee community itself, with two professional musicians - an oud player and a percussionist - and others with good people skills and deep emotional intelligence, including a former car mechanic, professional footballer, teacher, visual artist and air hostess. In 2018, we prepared to expand our mainly musical activities into a holistic intervention including creative arts, health care, social care, shelter and food security, and to adopt a "family" approach. In one of the preparatory training sessions, anticipating workshops with the families themselves, I asked the team to bring objects of importance to them, and to explain why they were important, and how they related to their lives. It was in some ways similar to the "Tree of Life" exercise familiar to many psychosocial workers. The session turned into an extraordinary sharing of stories, meanings and biographies. I knew that I was privileged to be listening to a symphony of human experience that was already becoming a kind of music in my ears - it seemed to be the only possible way of sharing its emotional force with others. There are seven "movements" each corresponding to a member of the team and an object: an olive branch, a rosary (*misbaha*), a red stone, a box, a photograph of clouds, an animation film about a balloon, and finally, two rosaries. Western musicians tend to think there is only one modernism - Western modernism - and that it is not as good as the old stuff (which was of course once "modernism" itself). In fact Arabic music has a vibrant modernism, sometimes reaching out towards European and other modernisms, and into the spaces in between. This piece is located in these spaces - I hope well clear of the "appropriation zone", in a place I feel I belong just now as a musician and human being - and includes extended Arabic and Western techniques as well as combinatorial Maqamat and Iqa'at."

Howard Skempton's Personal Commissions: Mindfulness and Human Rights

Recently commissioned by Elizabeth Carmack for her father and stepfather, Howard Skempton's "Heraclitus" (2021) and "To everything there is a season" (2023) were dedicated to and composed for the 100th anniversary of Murray Carmack (1920-2008) and Norman Whybray (1923-1998), respectively. "Heraclitus" is an appropriate poem to speak to the pianist, composer and academic in Murray Carmack, whereas "To everything there is a season" from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 is an ideal text for Old Testament Hebrew scholar Norman Whybray, who specialised in Wisdom Literature. Although "Heraclitus" (2021) testifies to our need for human rights, "To everything there is a season" (2023) reveals how mindfulness can transform our perception and values.

Howard Skempton's "Heraclitus" (2021) is a setting of a poem by William Johnson Cory (1823-1892). Murray Carmack identified strongly with the poet William Johnson Cory, who used marriage and a name change to help overcome social stigma for being gay. Despite the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969, the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms failed to include and protect the LGBTQ+ community until 1996. Murray Carmack's composition of "Heraclitus" (1973) on the 150th anniversary of the poet is a statement of identity, whereas Howard Skempton's setting of "Heraclitus" (2021) voices solidarity with LGBTQ+ rights. Theatre of Voices will be premiering Howard Skempton's "Heraclitus" (2021) alongside Murray Carmack's setting of "Heraclitus" (1973).

Returning to the University of Cambridge

After many years abroad, the Cambridge Music Conference returns to the University of Cambridge at the invitation of the Faculty of Music. The focus of Elizabeth Carmack's Visiting Fellowship "Music, Healing and Human Rights" involves seven new commissions. Britain's most outstanding composers Diana Burrell,

Richard Causton, Christopher Fox, Nigel Osborne, Howard Skempton and Errollyn Wallen, Master of the King's Music, will be included. Their new works on the theme of human rights acknowledge an urgency for change at this time of desperation and crisis in the international domain.

Cambridge Music Conference 2025 Commissions

The seven new commissions address diverse issues. The oppression and plight of Muslim women is the focus of Diana Burrell's "Unvoiced" (2024), which is a good introduction to the Master of the King's Music Errollyn Wallen's new work on "Intersectionality" (2025). Richard Causton's new work "Between God and the Wall" (2025) voices how freedom of speech in failing democracies has been compromised on account of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine. Nigel Osborne's recent intervention abroad has provided live-streamed master's degree courses to music therapists working with traumatised children in bunkers in eastern Ukraine. He has also worked in shelters and hospitals across Ukraine using song with children and soldiers for purposes of healing. The composer's therapeutic work also testifies to how music can benefit quality of sleep. "River and Ocean" (2024) transcends the conflict in Ukraine presenting us with an ideal landscape of the Dnipro/Dnieper River and the Black Sea. The voice of Jewish Russian dissident Mandelstam (1891-1938), persecuted by the Soviet authorities, still speaks the truth in "This Violent Land" (2024) by Elena Firsova. Closer to home, Christopher Fox's "David's Air" (2024) broaches the subject of police brutality toward Black immigrants living in the UK, with LGBTQ+ rights being affirmed in a new setting of William Johnson Cory's "Heraclitus" (2021) by Howard Skempton.

St. Catharine's Choir and Consort: Time and Place of World Premieres

Dr Edward Wickham will direct St Catharine's Choir and Consort. The juxtaposition of two works by each composer brings together sacred and secular statements. The religious works, already composed, present how mindfulness can change our perception of reality, whereas the secular pieces dedicated to human rights encourage action in the face of adversity as well as acknowledge a need for healing.

21 February - Friday 6:00pm - Kellaway Concerts - St Catharine's College Chapel, Cambridge
Diana Burrell - "Magnificat" (1996) + "Unvoiced" (2024) World Premiere
Christopher Fox - "Stille im Himmel" (2024) World Premiere + "David's Air" (2024) World Premiere
Nigel Osborne - "Prayer and Two Blessings" (2012) + "River and Ocean" (2024) World Premiere

14 March - Friday 6:00pm - Kellaway Concerts - St Catharine's College Chapel - Cambridge Festival of Ideas
Richard Causton - "The Flight" (2015) + "Between God and the Wall" (2025) World Premiere
Howard Skempton - "To every thing there is a season" (2023) + "Heraclitus" (2021)
Errollyn Wallen - Master of the King's Music - "Pace" (2017) + "Intersectionality" (2025) World Premiere

A closer look at Professor Richard Causton's new work "Between God and the Wall" (2025) presents a sequel to "The Flight" (2015), which inspires a parallel between refugee children fleeing their homeland today with the plight of the Christ child 2000 years ago. Both choral works are settings of poems by George Szirtes written expressly for the composer. The unique dialogue between poet and composer reveals a compassionate understanding of the misery, inhumanity and injustices in the Middle East. "Between God and the Wall" (2025) describes a world in which not only authoritarian regimes destroy freedom of speech by usurping control and silencing the truth, but our failing western democracies do as well. The conflict between Jews and Palestinians throughout the Diaspora is symbolized by the "Wall", which has impacted freedom of speech in civil discourse throughout the "free" world.

Errollyn Wallen, Master of the King's Music, returns to the University of Cambridge to present a new work on Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to challenge various forms of systemic prejudice. Errollyn Wallen's new choral work will be premiered alongside her "Pace" (2017), which was commissioned and premiered by King's College Choir for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols.

University of Cambridge Acknowledgement

Professor Ian Cross (30 October, 2024) acknowledges the Cambridge Music Conference: "As part of her Fellowship, Elizabeth has commissioned several musical works for performance from world-leading composers including the new Master of the King's Music, Errollyn Wallen, and Professor Nigel Osborne

MBE, who has conducted extensive musical work with war-traumatised children in conflict zones. These will be presented in the College and the University in a series of concerts that will highlight how music has the potential to endow our interactions with each other with empathic qualities. The works presented in the Cambridge premieres will span a range of contexts that centre on different and urgent issues in human rights, from the institutional oppression of women to the fracturing of identity that arises from displacement and migration. Music is perhaps the quintessential medium through which to explore and amplify these issues, drawing in performers and audiences in immediate engagement that can capture the texture of the experiences at the heart of these issues.”

Music Eurythmy: Movement and Dance - 2025

For anthroposophists especially interested in eurythmy, please see the following three eurythmy performances, for which the Cambridge Music Conference is responsible for commissioning the music:

Cambridge

26 February - Wednesday 7:00pm - Lee Hall - Wolfson College - “Music, Healing and Human Rights”

Maren Stott (eurythmy), Robert Davey (cello), Jinny Shaw (oboe d’amore) and Alan Stott (piano)

In conversation with composers Nigel Osborne and Howard Skempton with a world premiere of “to the end” (2020)

London

5 July - Saturday 7:00pm - Rudolf Steiner House, London - 100th Anniversary of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925)

Maren Stott (eurythmy), Robert Davey (cello), Jinny Shaw (oboe d’amore) and Alan Stott (piano)

Works composed for eurythmy on the theme of the Grail by Nigel Osborne, Jinny Shaw, and Howard Skempton

Dornach

22 November - Goetheanum, Basel, Switzerland - Eurythmy Festival - “Music, Healing and Human Rights”

Maren Stott (eurythmy), Jinny Shaw (oboe d’amore) and Alan Stott (piano)

With world premieres by Nigel Osborne and Howard Skempton on Human Rights for oboe d’amore

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The Cambridge Music Conference is an initiative dedicated to music and healing. Founder and artistic director Elizabeth Carmack conceived of the Cambridge Music Conference in 2000 inspired by her sister Catherine Carmack (1957-2003). The Cambridge Music Conference has organised twenty events in England, Canada and Switzerland having commissioned and premiered over sixty pieces of music by distinguished composers.

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Concerts, recitals and lectures in Cambridge England run from 18 February to 21 March 2025

For complete details please contact Elizabeth Carmack: elizabeth.carmack@gmail.com

Concert Links: <https://www.caths.cam.ac.uk/about-us/music/kellaway-concerts>

<https://cambridgemusicfestival.co.uk/event/theatre-of-voices-arvo-part/>

Howard Skempton’s “The Lord is my shepherd” (2018) composed for Mary Carmack-Whybray (1923-2017)

<https://soundcloud.com/oupacademic/07-the-lord-is-my-shepherd>

Elizabeth Carmack presents the Cambridge Music Conference at a Power of the Arts National Forum in Canada:

<https://vimeo.com/user49033371>

“Nigel Osborne: The Guitar Man of Lviv” by Susan Nickalls (2023, December 4)

<https://www.classical-music.uk/features/article/nigel-osborne-the-guitar-man-of-lviv>