

Press Release

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MacMillan premiere: a true story of virgin birth Parthenogenesis explored in new *scena* for voices and ensemble

Parthenogenesis
(world premiere)
Corn Exchange, Cambridge
12 September 2000, 7.30 pm

James MacMillan's new work **Parthenogenesis**, a *scena* for soprano, baritone, actress and ensemble (or chamber orchestra), is premiered in Cambridge on 12 September with Lisa Milne, Christopher Purves and the Britten Sinfonia conducted by the composer. The 40-minute work was commissioned by Theology Through the Arts and the premiere is one of the highlights of its festival in Cambridge, taking place between 10-17 September. The text is by Michael Symmons Roberts who has collaborated with MacMillan on a series of projects including the song-cycle **Raising Sparks** (also included in the Cambridge concert with Jean Rigby as soloist) and **Quickening** for voices and orchestra.

...a historic account of virgin birth...

The composer describes how **Parthenogenesis** grew from "a true account of a young woman caught on the streets of Hannover during an Allied bombing raid in 1944. She was unable to find her way to a shelter, and was thrown to the pavement by the blast of a bomb in a nearby street. She recovered from minor injuries, but nine months later gave birth to a daughter. This baby girl had identical fingerprints, blood type, and other indicators to the mother. The woman adamantly maintained that she had not had sex, and medical tests supported her claim. How was the child conceived? Examining doctors hypothesised that the shock of the bomb may have jarred a dormant body cell within the woman's womb, triggering parthenogenesis – nonsexual reproduction."

...new *scena* grows out of song...

The new work offers strong dramatic possibilities but is rooted in song rather than in opera, reflected in its small cast and compact instrumental ensemble. The composer envisages it being presented, rather like his earlier work **Búsqueda**, either in simple concert format, or with theatrical lighting, or in a more fully staged context. For further information on **Parthenogenesis**, including an interview with the composer, please visit our website at www.boosey.com/publishing.

BBC Philharmonic celebrates MacMillan in Manchester

launch of new association with BBC Philharmonic

MacMillan's new association with the BBC Philharmonic as Composer-Conductor is launched with a two week festival in Manchester (27 September – 5 October). The festival includes performances of *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* with Colin Currie as soloist (30 September, Bridgewater Hall) and *Symphony No.2* (4 October, Royal Northern College of Music and Drama) plus other concert and education events.

New MacMillan record releases on BIS and Black Box

first recordings of **Epiclesis**, **Ninian** and **Raising Sparks**

This autumn brings new MacMillan recordings on the BIS and Black Box labels. The latest in the ongoing series of BIS releases contains two concertos: **Epiclesis** with John Wallace as solo trumpet, and **Ninian** with John Cushing as clarinet soloist (BIS CD 1069). Black Box is releasing two new MacMillan discs: the first is a chamber music collection including the recent **Cello Sonata** with Raphael Wallfisch and John York and **Fourteen Little Pictures** for piano trio (BBM1008), and the second includes **Raising Sparks** with Jean Rigby and the Nash Ensemble (BBM1067).

For further information on James MacMillan please contact David Allenby (Publicist) on +44 (0)20 7291 7210, or Felicity Williams (Publicity Assistant) on +44 (0)20 7291 7226.