

ANTONY PITTS

BIOGRAPHY (May 2018)

Antony Pitts was born in 1969 and is a composer, conductor, sound designer, lecturer, developer, broadcaster, recording producer, and keyboard player, and recipient of the Radio Academy BT Award, the Cannes Classical Award, and the Prix Italia. One of several composers in his family, he sang as a treble in the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace, and wrote his first pieces down at the age of 8. At New College, Oxford he was an Academic Scholar and later an Honorary Senior Scholar; he gained the joint highest mark in Moderations and First-Class Honours in Music. His career since has combined academic, industry, and professional experience at world-class levels: a decade-long association with the Royal Academy of Music culminating in an internationally-recognized research project as Senior Lecturer; a rich and varied output as a BBC Senior Producer marked by ground-breaking practice and an exceptional catalogue of awards and nominations; and a creative record as a composer, scholar, and performer with an acclaimed series of recordings of “milestones of early Western music” on Naxos, and commissions for leading ensembles and festivals in the UK, Europe, and the Middle East, including the Cheltenham Music Festival, The Clerks, Dal’Ouna, Edington Festival of Music within the Liturgy, Festival of the Voice, King’s College London, the Netherlands’ Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap, London Festival of Contemporary Church Music, the Choir of New College Oxford, Oxford Camerata, Oxford Festival of Contemporary Music, Rundfunkchor Berlin, The Swingle Singers, and the Choir of Westminster Cathedral. While still at New College he founded TONUS PEREGRINUS and in 2004 won a Cannes Classical Award for his interpretation of Arvo Pärt’s *Passio* with the ensemble. He joined Radio 3 in 1992, and in 1995 received the Radio Academy BT Award for a pioneering webcast; he has been nominated no fewer than eight times for the premier international radio award, the Prix Italia, winning in 2004 with *A Pebble in the Pond*. He devised new courses in Composition and Creative Technology for the Royal Academy of Music, and is patron of the London Festival of Contemporary Church Music and an honorary Fellow of the Faculty of Church Music. As a performer, he made his Glastonbury debut in 2014.

Antony’s music has been premiered at Wigmore Hall and Westminster Cathedral in London, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and the Philharmonie Kammermusiksaal in Berlin, as well as at more unusual venues and occasions such as Crossness Engines Pumping Station and the memorial events for former Soviet agent Alexander Litvinenko; his scores are published by 1equalmusic and Faber Music – notably *XL*, the companion 40-part motet to Tallis’s *Spem in alium* – and recordings of his music, including several complete albums, are available on Delphian, Hyperion, Harmonia Mundi, Naxos, Signum, and Unknown Public, and he has a considerable output of radiophonic works and acoustic art commissioned by and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and across the EBU. He was commissioned by Klaus Heymann to create *The Naxos Book of Carols*, also published by Faber Music and circulated to millions of homes in the UK; his double-choir mass setting for the Dutch Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap was the first to be commissioned by the foundation for almost 500 years and was premiered complete and recorded in 2016 in The Netherlands under the direction of Stephen Layton for release in 2017; his cantata for string quartet and traditional Arab ensemble – *Who is my neighbour?* – was the focus of an Aldeburgh residency at Snape, as well as a teaching week for Aldeburgh Young Musicians and workshops at the Al Kamandjâti music centre in Ramallah, and he conducted its premiere at the opening night of the Spitalfields Summer Festival; his oratorio-musical *Jerusalem-Yerushalayim* received a standing ovation both at its first performance in Northern Ireland and at its U.S. premiere in May 2012, and a studio recording under his direction was released as a double album in 2013 and was remixed for release with narration by David Suchet in 2017. Recent commissions include pieces for the Choir of New College, Oxford and an ensemble *Antiphony* for Syria, and he is now working with Adrian Self on a new musical called *The Process* inspired by Kafka, starlings, and social media. In 2016 Antony became the first new Artistic Director for a quarter of a century of Australia’s premier vocal ensemble, The Song Company.

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PRESS

"From silence, to one, to many, it felt like the perfect opening to a new chapter...
It's hard to imagine a better performance." **Sydney Morning Herald**

A composer on a spiritual quest who's found the near-perfect singers for it..." **Gramophone**

"TONUS PEREGRINUS, a vocal ensemble made up of first-rank singers led by Pitts..." **All Music Guide**

"...combined talent for divinely pure sound..." **Choir & Organ**

"...My first impulse on hearing this disc was to commend it unreservedly to each and every man, woman, and child on the planet..." **Fanfare**

"....Daunted by contemporary music? Look no further." **Gramophone Top 10 Modern Classics**

"Pitts has shown a sensitivity to the range of early music that places him among the leading interpreters..." **Fanfare**

"...perhaps one of the most sought-after British composers of contemporary choral works..." **Classical.net**

"...*There is a green hill far away* should be in every high school choral library..."
ChoralNet Composition Spotlight

"...His is a compositional voice of real personality and imagination..." **Gramophone Editor's Choice**

"...a unique, strong, and, above all, spiritual voice seems to speak through." **Church Times**

"a mesmerizing work that folds time in on itself, beautifully blending old and new" **iTunes**

"a fascinating, multi-layered work that blends chant, polychoral elements and medieval and Renaissance polyphony with techniques drawn from more recent neo-tonal and minimalist styles" **Gramophone**

"In terms of sheer beauty of performance and recording, this disc takes some beating..." **Fanfare**

"...one of the most rewarding I've heard for years..." **On an Overgrown Path**

"...it's pretty much impossible not to reach a state of bliss after listening to a new album featuring seven pieces chosen by English a capella choir TONUS PEREGRINUS..." **Musical Toronto**

"Kick yourself if you missed: Antony Pitts' extraordinary sound collage, *A Parisian in Paradise*, on Radio 3... Mind-blowing." **The Independent on Sunday Review of the Year**

"For bare-faced cheek no one can touch him and if now he says he'll give us Roget's *Thesaurus* on a bus ticket I'll believe him..."
The Observer

"Gratitude was my overwhelming emotion, too, on hearing Radio 3's Sunday Feature: *Bach and the Art of Bee-keeping*..." **Church Times**

"*A Wireless Revelation* was an excellent case in point: I can't think of anywhere else that this project would happen..." **The Guardian**

"It is almost impossible not to be drawn in by such resonant, dire phrases, many of them familiar... it is compelling..." **The Times**

"...it wasn't so much interesting, it was transfixing....treating us as people who don't actually think their brains are full yet." **The Independent on Sunday**

"...Radio 3 music documentaries seem to fall into three categories; programmes about music, programmes around music, and programmes produced by Antony Pitts..." **The Independent**

"Tonight's *Between the Ears* is Radio 3 at its best, by turns freewheeling, precious, touching, aggravating and riveting...
Frequently beautiful, cumulatively moving – and fascinating radio..." **Financial Times**

"I sat either slack-jawed in astonishment or emotion... 'it was brilliant'..." **The Independent**

"...it turned out it was by Antony Pitts of TONUS PEREGRINUS, who has remarkable ways with music..."
The Independent on Sunday

"...Pitts is a composer to watch out for..." **Allmusic**

"...this was seriously interesting programming...
a reminder of the staggering virtuosity of which The Song Company is capable...
a tour de force... What will they think of next?" **Australian Stage**

"some of the most challenging and interesting classical and contemporary concert music you'll ever hear performed live...
nothing less than a transcendental experience for the listener." **TimeOut**
