

NCEM YOUNG COMPOSERS AWARD 2020

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NCEM YOUNG COMPOSERS AWARD

The annual NCEM Young Composers Award was launched in 2008 and is the only such scheme in the UK. It offers a unique opportunity for young composers to engage with the instruments and performance styles of early music, and to work with leading professional early musicians. In bridging the worlds of 'early' and 'new' music, the Award complements the NCEM's education policy, to support and nurture young composers and demonstrate to all participants that the music of previous centuries is relevant to today's creative endeavours.

This major national annual award is open to young composers resident in the UK, up to the age of 25 at the time that entry closed (this year, 20 March 2020). There are two age categories:

18 years and under

19–25 years.

This year the NCEM and BBC Radio 3 are delighted to welcome back as partners the internationally acclaimed vocal ensemble **The Tallis Scholars**, directed by Peter Phillips. The young composers were invited to create a new polyphonic work for unaccompanied choir, setting either the prayer *Our Father (Pater noster)* from St Matthew's Gospel, or the first and last verses of George Herbert's poem *The Flower*.

The *Pater noster* has been set many times, in many languages, by composers from Josquin, Lassus and Palestrina (in Latin) to John Tavener (in English). The young composers were permitted to set the text in Latin, in an English translation, or even a combination of Latin and English. It was not obligatory to set the complete text, either of the *Pater noster* or *The Flower*.

The composers were asked to explore the polyphonic possibilities of the vocal ensembles who were to perform their piece. In particular, they were encouraged to think about setting their chosen text in ways that responded to the imagery of the words and also had a sense of melodic direction shown by the great composers of Renaissance polyphony.

Earlier today the shortlisted entries were presented by **Ex Corde Vocal Ensemble** in a workshop with the young composers led by composer **Christopher Fox** (Professor of Music, Brunel University).

Tonight, the pieces will be performed in front of a panel of judges:

Peter Phillips *Director, The Tallis Scholars*

Les Pratt *Producer, BBC Radio 3*

Delma Tomlin *Director, NCEM*

At the end of the evening the two winners will be announced, one for each of the two age groups. Composers will be judged on their:

- skill of compositional techniques, including writing for voices;
- innovation of composition, fused with an awareness of The Tallis Scholars' style.

The performances will be streamed live and will be available to view again at **ncem.co.uk/composersaward2020**

The winning works will be premiered by The Tallis Scholars in a public performance at Cadogan Hall, London, on 24 March 2021. This concert will be recorded for broadcast on BBC Radio 3's **Early Music Show**.

THE TEXTS

Pater noster

(Matthew 6:9–13)

Pater noster, qui es in caelis,
sanctificetur nomen tuum;
Adveniat regnum tuum.
Fiat voluntas tua sicut
in caelo et in terra.
Panem nostrum quotidianum
da nobis hodie,
Et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus
debitoribus nostris.
Et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.
Quia tuum est regnum
et potentia et gloria
in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day
our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
whotrespas against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Flower

(George Herbert 1593–1633)

How fresh, oh Lord, how sweet and clean
Are thy returns! even as the flowers in spring;
To which, besides their own demean,
The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.
Grief melts away
Like snow in May,
As if there were no such cold thing.

These are thy wonders, Lord of love,
To make us see we are but flowers that glide;
Which when we once can find and prove,
Thou hast a garden for us where to bide;
Who would be more,
Swelling through store,
Forfeit their Paradise by their pride.

EX CORDE VOCAL ENSEMBLE

directed by **Paul Gameson**

Helena Daffern, Ali Russell Pawley, Hattie Pecksmith,

Anna Snow *sopranos*

Laura Baldwin, Louisa Dobson *altos*

Jason Darnell, Christopher O’Gorman *tenors*

Thomas Lowen, Andrew Thompson *basses*

Formed in 2020, Ex Corde consists of professional singers from across the UK, with diverse and successful careers, who are alumni from the University of York and the York-based chamber choir The Ebor Singers. The ensemble uses vocal music to create, collaborate and connect, bringing composers, performers and audiences together. A champion of British choral composers, its forthcoming projects include working with York-based composers Ambrose Field and David Lancaster – as well as the next generation of British young composers.

In addition to performing the new compositions, Ex Corde Vocal Ensemble will sing other works inspired by the texts in this year’s Award; these will be performed before and after the new compositions:

The Flower

Alec Roth *b. 1948*

The Crimson Sun

Alexander Campkin *b. 1984*

Beati quorum via integra est

Owain Park *b. 1993*

Never weather-beaten sail

Charles Hubert Parry *1848–1918*

Music: An Ode

Ben Parry *b. 1965*

The pieces by Alec Roth, Alexander Campkin and Ben Parry are licensed courtesy of Peters Edition Limited, London

YOUNG COMPOSERS: 2020 SHORTLIST

18 years and under

Ethan Lieber	The Flower
Eilidh Owen	As if there were no such cold thing
Emily Pedersen	Pater Noster

19 to 25 years

Noah Vaughn Bray	Our Father
Sam Gooderham	late-past
Caitlin Harrison	The Flower
James Mitchell	The Lord's Prayer
Fintan O'Hare	Come Passing Rain

The composers are listed alphabetically on the following pages.

NOAH VAUGHN BRAY: Our Father

19 to 25 years (b. 1997)

Noah Vaughn Bray is from Arkansas, USA and now lives in Washington DC. He began his musical education at the age of 10, playing the clarinet, and has been composing since the age of 15. He has written for ensembles of varying sizes, from chamber choral groups to symphony orchestras. He is also a singer, and has sung at venues such as Carnegie Hall (New York), Orchestra Hall (Minnesota), Brancaloni Castle in Italy, and in Oxford. He was a student at Concordia College in Minnesota, USA, and then at the University of Oxford, where he studied Music Composition with Robert Saxton.

Our Father has two main themes: reverence during prayer, and lament. These two are expressed separately but combined throughout the piece. The concept of reverence is suggested in how the English text is declaimed in a pointillistic fashion, where small bits of text are given at one time. This occurs consistently throughout the piece. This aspect is most apparent during the middle of the piece where the choir sings together on an expanded chord with only one moving inner line. I hope here to emphasise this line and provide a sense of urgency within the prayer text. The lament grows throughout the piece and acts as the main dynamic push as the piece progresses. The use of the Latin 'Pater noster' is intentional to contrast with the English on both a textual level and to further remove the two musical ideas. The lament descends at the end, to emphasise the expressive urgency that I present throughout the piece.

SAM GOODERHAM: late-past

19 to 25 years (b. 1994)

Sam Gooderham was born in the south of England and now lives in London. He studied composition with Benjamin Oliver, Matthew Shlomowitz and Michael Finnissy at the University of Southampton, and with Ruben Sverre Gjertsen and Sigurd Fischer Olsen at the Grieg Academy in Bergen, Norway. He has recently completed a Masters in Composition at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where he studied under Laurence Crane. He received the Hazel Muras-Osborn Prize for distinction in composition from the University of Southampton, and in 2019 won the Tracey Chadwell Memorial Prize for modern song. His music has been performed in the UK and Norway by groups such as EXAUDI, Plus Minus, BIT20 Ensemble and Sjøforsvarets musikkorps (SFMK). His output mainly consists of chamber music, and his recent work has focused on gradual, process-led changes in texture and soundworld. He is also interested in the use of electronics and the combination of music with other artistic disciplines.

late-past is built around a single fragment of George Herbert's The Flower – 'Grief melts away / Like snow in May, / As if there were no such cold thing' – which slowly shifts and unravels. Over time the texture itself thaws and melts, until there is nothing left but isolated lines dying away.

CAITLIN HARRISON: The Flower

19 to 25 years (b. 1996)

Caitlin Harrison is a composer, teacher and performer based in Oxford. She learnt piano from a young age, when growing up in Lincolnshire, before taking up singing and the harp. She began her formal music education at Birmingham Junior Conservatoire as a primary study composition student, studying for two years under Lee Differ. She subsequently took part in the Sound and Music Summer School, working with freelance professional musicians and composers from The Purcell School and Royal Northern College of Music. She was a composer for the BBC Stream of Sound project in 2012, when she composed for members of the BBC Symphony Orchestra for a concert in the Barbican Centre. She graduated from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in 2018, where she was mentored by Deirdre Gribbin and Stephen Montague, and she is currently studying for an MPhil in composition at the University of Oxford under head of composition Robert Saxton. She was shortlisted for the Ernest Read Symphony Orchestra's Emerging Composers' Competition 2020. Recent commissions include St Wulfram's Church (Grantham), Exeter College Chapel Choir (Oxford), and Ensemble ISIS.

This five-part polyphonic motet starts from the smallest of motifs, an interval passed between the upper voices. The opening theme then begins to unfold, like the blooming bud of a flower; surging with the highs and lows of Herbert's text. The first section then, quite literally, 'melts away' into a warmer texture. Here, while the text reflects on humanity as a creation of God, musically we experience a humbler sound, something less bright than the opening, but with no less movement. The piece then blooms, yet again, with more and more vigour. The listener hears a somewhat questioning tension on 'who would be more', before one final surge, ending the piece joyously with remnants of the opening theme.

ETHAN LIEBER: The Flower

18 years and under (b. 2002)

Ethan Lieber began playing the piano at the age of five, and so from an early age was exposed to a variety of music. He now enjoys composing in various styles, from classical music to pop and jazz. He is currently a student at Mill Hill School and attends Junior Guildhall, and his ambition is to go on to music college to study film music. He sings in the school's Chapel Choir and also enjoys singing jazz standards, performing in venues outside school. In addition to his musical interests, he is a keen tennis player.

In my composition I explore the relationship I can create with close harmonies to personify the given text. Devices such as imitation in different voice parts complementing the blocked harmony are used to create movement to the piece. As the poem is about the changing of seasons impacting a person's perspective of life and relationship with God, I wanted to create a changing harmonic sound world to represent the development of seasons and the outlook on life.

JAMES MITCHELL: The Lord's Prayer

19 to 25 years (b. 1997)

James Mitchell is an organist and composer based in Devon. He is currently studying for a Masters in Music at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, having recently graduated with a Double First from Girton College, Cambridge. Formerly organ scholar at Girton, he accompanied the college choir on tours to Israel, Singapore and Italy, as well as various UK cathedrals, and also performs with the choir on two recordings and broadcasts on BBC Radio 4 and Cam FM. He has been awarded the diploma of Associate of the Royal College of Organists (ARCO) and has previously held scholarships at Ely and Manchester cathedrals.

I was inspired to write this piece by the simple beauty of the post-Reformation Tudor anthems, as exemplified in works such as Thomas Tallis's If ye love me and Richard Farrant's Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake. In those works, the simple textures and harmonies allow the text to be clearly heard while still retaining the beautiful polyphony associated with the Renaissance. The tonality of my piece is constantly shifting, an attempt to capture the pure, celestial sound the Renaissance composers achieved through their careful control of counterpoint and dissonance, creating a sacred space detached from the outside world that is suitable for meditation and prayer.

FINTAN O'HARE: Come Passing Rain

19 to 25 years (b. 1995)

Fintan O'Hare is a composer from Cornwall with an interest in small gestures and repetition; his music often explores phrases built from a small collection of sounds and their variations. He studied composition at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, and later studied for a Masters degree at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. His pieces have been performed by the Danish Radio Choir, Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart and the Avanti Ensemble, and he has also created installation pieces using junk objects and the hums, clicks and whirs of electric motors. He recently had a piece performed at UNM festival in Finland, and is a finalist in the Prix Annelie de Man Black Pencil competition. He currently lives in London, where he writes music and teaches piano.

This piece takes the text of George Herbert's poem The Flower, splitting and recombining elements of the text into a small collection of material fragments, and setting them to simple triads and single notes. Syllables from the poem are emphasised through percussive whispers to highlight the quality and colour of the sung text, and as these fragments are repeated and recycled into longer strings of material the text forms combinations of phrases and words that almost make sense.

EILIDH OWEN: As if there were no such cold thing

18 years and under (b. 2003)

Eilidh Owen began singing with Lichfield Cathedral Musicshare Young Voices in 2009, with whom she sang as part of the UK premier tour of Karl Jenkins's *Peacemakers* at Birmingham Symphony Hall in 2012. She joined Lichfield Cathedral Choir in 2013 and spent five years as a chorister, finishing as head chorister in 2018. During this time she toured with the choir to Italy, France and Germany, and was also a member of Cathedral Choristers of Britain, performing in St Paul's Cathedral in London. After a year out for GCSEs, she rejoined Lichfield Cathedral Choir as a sixth-form choral scholar in 2019 and began studying for A-Level Music, soon discovering a passion for composition. Her entry is her first choral piece, but she is already working on another choral work, this time for Christmas. A keen dancer, she hopes to continue into higher education to study Musical Theatre and Music.

As if there were no such cold thing is intended to portray the season of spring as described in the first stanza of George Herbert's poem The Flower. I used my experience of singing sacred choral music to inspire me when writing this piece; however, I also tried to experiment more with harmony to portray the moods I felt when first reading this text.

EMILY PEDERSEN: Pater Noster

18 years and under (b. 2001)

Emily Pedersen moved to England at the age of 12, after an international upbringing in Thailand, Denmark and Malaysia. Already playing piano and trumpet, she was encouraged by her school music department to start composing. In 2018 she was the North Yorkshire County Youth Orchestra Composer, and her piece *Space to Breathe* was premiered by the orchestra. In 2019 she won the Ora Singers Youth Composer Competition, benefiting enormously from the mentoring programme and the opportunity to meet other young composers. She then became a first-study composer at the Junior Royal Northern College of Music and this September moved to Manchester to study composition at the Royal Northern College of Music.

My piece is about repetition in religion and how familiar structures can free the mind to soar away from the prayer in a way that is still inspired by it. It also touches on the vulnerability of religion and how it encourages people to delve within their souls and believe in something of which there will never be any earthly proof.

PREVIOUS WINNERS

<i>Year</i>	<i>In association with</i>	<i>18 years and under</i>	<i>19–25 years</i>
2019	Liam Byrne		Sarah Cattley Derri Joseph Lewis
2018	English Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble	Lilly Vadaneaux	Andrew Blair
2017	The Tallis Scholars	Dominic Wills	Frederick Viner
2016	Theatre of the Ayre	Alex Dakin	Kristina Arakelyan
2015	Dunedin Consort	Joshua Urben	John Goldie-Scot
2014	The Tallis Scholars	Freya Ireland	Hugo Bell Kerensa Briggs
2013	Florilegium	Lilly Vadaneaux	Joseph Howard
2012	The Tallis Scholars	Alex Woolf	Ben Rowarth
2011	Fretwork	Bertie Baigent Sarah Gait	Chris Roberts
2010	The Tallis Scholars	Owain Park	Alexander Campkin
2009	The Tallis Scholars	Elizabeth Edwards	Michael Perrett
2008	The Tallis Scholars	Kerrin Tatman	