



Embrace of Fire

music
for
organ
by

*Naji
Hakim*

*Simon
Leach*

with Benedict Holland *violin* | John Turner *recorder* | Randal McCusker *tenor*

Embrace of Fire

Naji Hakim (b. 1955)

	Salve Regina		8:00
1	Plainsong	1:35	
2	Salve Regina *	6:25	
3	Capriccio *		9:34
	The Embrace of Fire		15:42
4	Plainsong Introduction	0:14	
5	I	4:02	
6	II	5:47	
7	Plainsong Introduction to movement III	0:22	
8	III	5:16	
	Toccata on the Introit for the Feast of the Epiphany		10:21
9	Plainsong Introduction	2:21	
10	Toccata on the Introit for the Feast of the Epiphany	7:59	
	Diptych **		6:46
11	I Cantilène	2:35	
12	II Humoresque	4:10	
	Hommage à Igor Stravinsky		19:57
13	I Prélude	6:19	
14	II Danse	5:10	
15	III Final	8:26	
	Total duration		70:43

Simon Leach (organ of the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus, Manchester)

Plainsong sections: **Ranald McCusker (tenor)**

* **Benedict Holland** (violin) | ** **John Turner** (recorder)

Introduction

I first met Naji Hakim in 1988 when I took part in a Royal Northern College of Music trip to Paris, directed by the Organ Tutor, Gordon Stewart. I was greatly moved by his inspirational improvisations and Hakim's distinctly original style. On my return I had much enthusiasm for the music and immediately started to prepare his compositions. The Principal at the RNCM, Sir John Manduell, was aware of my desire to prepare Naji's work and fully supported me with generous college grants to attend the Summer Paris Academy in 1989 and then to pay for individual lessons with the composer in Paris. Sadly, Sir John passed away just before we recorded this album and he was very much in our thoughts during the sessions.

I am particularly grateful to Ged Mason for the generous financial support that has enabled this CD to be produced. This recording is dedicated to the memory of his father, the late Gerry Mason.

I send a special "thank you" to Gordon Stewart and Thomas Trotter for their generosity and inspirational teaching.

I am also very grateful to my wife Helen and our children for supporting me in the preparation of the recording.

Simon Leach

The music

We present two versions of the *Salve Regina*. Ranald McCusker sings the extended plainsong version. The violin and organ piece is based on the solemn tone. The gregorian line is unchanged and it evolves slowly above an expressive harmony. The text of the prayer is underlined by the meditative, soft and peaceful character. The registrations that Hakim suggested successfully marry the violin and organ to create a beautiful and peaceful prayerful composition. The expression pedal on the swell is fully utilised and the softer stops, particularly the mutation stops on the choir division, come into their own as the organ contrasts well with the varied registers of the violin.

The *Capriccio* for violin and organ develops a lively, dancing theme in an abridged sonata form. The exposition introduces thematic derivations, developing a joyful theme that also appears in the violin part. A second contrasting, sensual theme with a soft percussive accompaniment on the organ leads into a varied recapitulation of the two ideas before the appearance of the sparkling coda. The *Capriccio* has virtuoso writing for both instruments and the cross-rhythms create energy and excitement throughout. The dialogues between the instruments give the organist the opportunity to show off the variety of the orchestral sounds of the instrument and illustrate the flexibility of the instrument and its ability to accompany the violin with sensitivity.

The Embrace of Fire was awarded first prize in the Anton Heiller Memorial competition for Organ Compositions in Collegedale, Tennessee, 1986. Naji Hakim writes: "Man moves within the physical limits of Flesh, Space and Time. Joys, Sorrows, Union and Separation punctuate his existence which wends inexorably towards death." The title is inspired by the icon of the Trinity by Roublon. It may be seen as an Act of Faith in the Great Beyond, in God's infinite Love, in Love stronger than Death. Each of the three movements is prefaced by a quotation from Scripture, the underlying theme, and a brief description of the movement.

1 "Come unto me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" *Matthew 11:28-30* (Gregorian theme of the Vespers of the Feast of the Sacred Heart)

The movement comprises, in succession, *Ostinato*; Christ's loving call to His people; mystical dance.

2. "This have I desired, even unto death. Let the fire which I have kindled on earth consume them! And let their blood and their faces become light, like those who go, dancing, to a wedding feast". *Adapted from Luke 12:49*

This movement illustrates the "Consuming Fire". Several vehement, even savage rhythmical moods alternate in forte and fortissimo dynamics. The main motive, utilised melodically and harmonically, is a hindu scale – leitmotive of the *Sept Chorals-Poèmes d'Orgue pour les sept paroles du Christ*, Op 67, by Charles Tournemire.

3. "They who eat of my flesh and drink of my blood abide in me and I in them. And through me, they will live beyond death, as you, O Father, fill them with your Spirit the cup of my blood, so that, fulfilled with joy, they may draw from the well of my heart". *Adapted from John 6:57, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Isaiah 12:3*

The five sections of this movement follow an arch form: Introduction, dance, prayer of Thanksgiving, dance, and coda (reprise of Introduction). The thematic material includes the gregorian theme from the Communion of the Feast of the Sacred Heart treated in irregular rhythm, the theme of the first movement and the Hindu scales of the second movement in filigree. In the Embrace of Fire the organ is employed in a totally original way and fully utilises the spectacular and specific palette of fine sounds from the William Hill organ at the Holy Name.

Hakim, as with his French precursors, is always specific about the choice of registrations in his compositions. The movement contrasts the softest sounds on the organ and he uses the reeds to full effect in a virtuosic and triumphant manner.

The *Toccata on the Introit for the Feast of the Epiphany* was premiered by myself at the Church of the Holy Name in Manchester on Friday 6th January 2016 followed by a performance at Westminster Cathedral, London on the Feast of the Epiphany. I then played the composition live on BBC radio 4 on Epiphany Sunday, 2018.

This Toccata is a proclamation of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, based on the Introit of the Feast of the Epiphany. The Toccata develops a set of symphonic variations with virtuoso textures, putting in relief the powerful character of the words of the Gregorian text: **Ecce advenit dominator Dominus: et regnum in manu eius, et protestas, et imperium, Deus, iudicium tuum regida: et iustitiam tuam Filio regis.** "Behold the Lord the Ruler is come: and the Kingdom is in His Hand, and power, and dominion Give to the king Thy judgement, O God and to the king's Son thy justice." The Toccata was written specifically for the 1871 William Hill organ and fully utilises the contrasting choruses on the Great, Swell and Choir. The virtuosic manual flourishes punctuate the timeless and lyrical plainsong throughout, finally building up to the fantastic climatic close, where the Hill organ is played at full strength, with rapid flourishes in the manuals singing above the strong pedal *cantus* with the final reading of the Epiphany plainsong.

The *Diptych* is written for the unusual pairing of organ with recorder. The *Cantilène* is based on a popular melody of the 18th century, probably by Giovanni Batista Pergolesi (1710-1736). The French version is best known as "Bonne nuit les petits".

The *Humoresque* is a varied rondo using the characteristic tonalities of the txistu (a basque flute with three holes). John Turner uses the tenor recorder in the *Cantilène* and the treble for the *Humoresque*. Both organist and recorder player are fully tested in the *Humoresque* which has consistently virtuosic patterns throughout. The flute on the great organ successfully complements the treble recorder in this movement which owes a great deal to the French Toccata movement.

Hommage à Igor Stravinsky is a triptych which presents very contrasting colours and dynamics with short cyclical melodic and rhythmic motives inspired by the Gregorian chant. The rhythmic energy that is inspired by the works of Ivor Stravinsky is evident and there are hints of references to his major work in each of the three movements. Hakim uses the organ to great effect, particularly requesting imaginative, contrasting and at times arguably unusual registrations. There is much antiphonal writing in the three movements, with the sudden and effective manual changes helping to provide the energy and excitement that consistently underpins the composition. The piece owes much to the composers of the French Symphonic School in its architecture and use of the instrument, but at the same time there is a deep sense of originality. The *Prélude* is in a varied song form in a rather harmonic idiom. The *Danse* which follows is both rhythmical and contrapuntal (fugato) with a coda based on the characteristic pedal ostinato of the movement. The brilliant *Final* adopts a very contrasted and free symphonic variation structure. The work was premiered by Marie-Bernadette Dufourcet on November 25th, 1987 at the Royal Festival Hall in London.

The composer

Naji Subhy Paul Irénée Hakim was born in Beirut , 31 October, 1955. He studied with Jean Langlais (organ), Evelyn Aiello (conducting), and at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris - classes of Roger Boutry (harmony), Jean-Claude Henry (counterpoint), Marcel Bitsch (fugue), Rolande Falcinelli (organ), Jacques Castérède (analysis) and Serge Nigg (orchestration), where he was awarded seven first prizes.

He is a licentiate teacher in organ from Trinity College of Music in London and won ten first prizes at international organ and composition competitions. In 1991 he was awarded the Prix André Caplet from the Académie des Beaux-Arts and in 2009 the Premier Prix du Concours de Musique Sacrée de la Cathédrale de Monaco.

At first organist of the Basilique du Sacré-Coeur, Paris from 1985 until 1993, he then became organist of l'église de la Trinité, in succession to Olivier Messiaen, from 1993 until 2008. He is professor of musical analysis at the Conservatoire National de Région de Boulogne-Billancourt, and visiting professor at the Royal Academy of Music, London.

He is a graduate of the École Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications in Paris, member of the Consociatio Internationalis Musicae Sacrae in Rome and Doctor honoris causa of the Pontifical University Saint-Esprit of Kaslik, Lebanon . In 2007, His Holiness Pope Benediktus XVI has awarded Naji Hakim The Augustae crucis insigne pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, for his excellent commitment and work for the benefit of the Church and the Holy Father.

Hakim's works include instrumental music (organ, flute, bassoon, horn, trumpet, harp, guitar, violin, piano), symphonic music (Les Noces de l'Agneau, Hymne de l'Univers, Ouverture Libanaise, Påskeblomst, Augsburgs Symphonie, five organ concertos, a violin concerto, a piano concerto), and vocal music (oratorio Saul de Tarse, cantata Phèdre, Magnificat and four masses).



Naji Hakim

Simon Leach



The musicians

Simon Leach graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music in 1992 with the Alice Shawcross Organ Award. Whilst there, he won first prize in the Prix Scabo keyboard competition, performing Naji Hakim's *Embrace of Fire*, and was invited to perform the same composer's *Hommage à Igor Stravinsky* in the prestigious Principal's concert. Earlier in the year Simon gave the World Premiere of Hakim's *Toccata on the feast of Epiphany* and the first London performance at Westminster Cathedral.

Simon currently combines work as a freelance performer with a busy teaching schedule. He teaches at The Manchester Grammar School, Withington Girls' School and St Bede's College. Simon has performed on piano, organ and harpsichord with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, The Hallé Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, Northern Sinfonia, London Festival Orchestra and the Northern Chamber Orchestra. He has given organ recitals in Cathedrals and Concert Halls including Westminster, Newcastle, Coventry, Chester and the Reid Concert Hall, Edinburgh.

He frequently travels to New York to perform at venues including St Patrick's Cathedral and the Church of St Thomas 5th Avenue. In February 2017 he was invited to represent Great Britain at the International Recital Series at Notre Dame Cathedral Paris, performing to an audience of 2000. He is also on the team of organists for the BBC Daily Service which is broadcast live on BBC Radio 4.

Simon is organist at the Holy Name Church, Manchester. He is Artistic Director of the International Organ Recital Series there and accompanies the choir for mass. In September 2018 Simon takes up a new post as Organist at St. Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral in Edinburgh.

Benedict Holland studied at the Royal Academy of Music with Manoug Parikian and was subsequently a prizewinner at the Royal Northern College of Music, where he studied with Yossi Zivoni.

He was a founder member of the Matisse Piano Quartet and the Music Group of Manchester, broadcasting regularly for the BBC, recording, and undertaking British Council tours and is a member of the Victoria String Quartet whose acclaimed début concert took place in 2017. Also an experienced orchestral leader, he has guest-led many of the UK's major orchestras, including the Hallé, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Northern Sinfonia, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Ensemble, Orchestra of Opera North and BBC Philharmonic.

Ben has always championed contemporary music, working with composers Harrison Birtwistle, John Casken, Brett Dean, Oliver Knussen, Steven Mackey, Anna Meredith, Mark Simpson and Duncan Ward, and has been Psappha's violinist since 2010. Personal highlights with Psappha include collaborations with Peter Maxwell Davies, taking Klas Torstensson's Violin Concerto to a residency at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, premiering Mark Simpson's chamber opera *Pleasure*, a tour to Israel of Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King* and a recent broadcast for the BBC of Charlotte Bray's evocative concerto *Caught in Treetops*.

Ben has been the leader of chamber orchestra Sinfonia ViVa since 2001 and the orchestra's Artistic Advisor since 2006, appearing as both director and soloist. Recent solo appearances include works by Beethoven and Mendelssohn, and a performance of Mozart's A major concerto, broadcast on Classic FM.

Ben teaches at the RNCM, where he was awarded a professorship in 2016, Junior RNCM, and Chetham's School of Music. He gives consultative classes in orchestral and contemporary techniques at Birmingham and Trinity Laban Conservatoires and professional development classes for string teachers throughout the UK. He plays on a rare violin by Rogeri of 1710.

John Turner is one of the leading recorder players of today. Born in Stockport, he was Senior Scholar in Law at Fitzwilliam College Cambridge before pursuing a legal career, acting for many distinguished musicians and musical organisations (including the Halle Orchestra, the Royal Northern College of Music and the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain), alongside his many musical activities. These included numerous appearances and recordings with David Munrow's Early Music Consort of London, the Academy of Ancient Music, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields and the English Baroque Soloists.

He now devotes his time to playing, writing, reviewing, publishing, composing and generally energising. He has played as recorder soloist with the Halle Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Manchester Camerata, the English Baroque Soloists, the English Chamber Orchestra, and many other leading orchestras and ensembles. Concertos and works with orchestra have been written for him by Gordon Crosse, Anthony Gilbert, Peter Hope, Kenneth Leighton, Elis Pehkonen, Alan Bullard, John Casken, and many other distinguished composers.

His recordings include no less than five sets of the *Brandenburg Concertos*, as well as the F Major version of Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 with Menuhin and George Malcolm, but lately he has made numerous acclaimed recordings of the recorder's contemporary concerto and chamber music repertoire, including four solo concerto discs, all of which have received critical acclaim. Recent recordings on the Divine Art and Métier labels include music by the novelist and composer (and fellow Mancunian) Anthony Burgess, Peter Hope, Jim Parker, Roy Heaton Smith, and also a disc in memory of Alfred Deller (a good friend) with James Bowman and Robin Blaze, showcasing music by Blow, Handel, Tippett and Fricker.

In the last few years he has played in Germany, Switzerland, Poland, France, New Zealand, Japan and the USA, and given many recitals on Radio 3 with pianist Peter Lawson. In all, he has given the first performances of over 500 works for the recorder, with works by many non-British composers, including Leonard Bernstein, Ned Rorem, Peter Sculthorpe, Douglas Lilburn, Petr Eben and Ruth Zechlin.

Many of the works he has premiered have now entered the standard repertoire, and these and his own recorder compositions are regularly set for festivals and examinations. Two new works recently published are *Three Salutes* and *A Short Sprint*, the latter for the young Japanese recorder player Hidehiro Nakamura. He edits series of recorder publications for both Forsyths and Peacock Press, and founded the periodical *Manchester Sounds*, in response to the perceived threat to music libraries in Great Britain. In addition he was responsible for the rediscovery of several works for his instrument, including the Rawsthorne *Recorder Suite*, Antony Hopkins' *Pastiche Suite*, Herbert Murrill's *Sarabande*, the Handel *F Major Trio Sonata* and John Parry's *Nightingale Rondo* (the only substantial known British nineteenth century work for a fipple flute). He was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the Royal Northern College of Music in 2002 for his services to British music, and is a Visiting Distinguished Scholar of Manchester University.

Born in Scotland into a musical family, **Ranald McCusker** started singing from an early age, with his first operatic experience at the age of 4 as Sorrow in *Madama Butterfly*. He was a chorister at Westminster Cathedral and then continued on to Douglas Academy Music School in Glasgow. After leaving school, Ranald spent two years in Cornwall as a choral scholar at Truro Cathedral. He has recently finished his undergraduate degree at the Royal Northern College of Music, and continues studying with Paul Nilon.

Ranald works regularly with a number of opera festivals throughout the UK and Ireland, including The Grange Festival, Wexford Festival Opera, Buxton Opera, Woodside Opera and Dorset Opera. During his time in Cornwall, Ranald sang for Duchy Opera as Matthew in the premiere production of Paul Drayton's *The Mermaid of Zennor*. His latest appearances include the flamboyant ice cream seller Lippo Fiorentino in Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* at the RNCM and the more serious role of Orestes in Byre Opera Company's *Iphigenie en Tauride*. In 2017 he played the protagonist Gardefeu, in RNCM's winter production of *La Vie Parisienne*. Recent oratorio work includes the tenor solos in Handel's *Messiah*, Haydn's *Creation* and Mozart's *Requiem*.



John Turner

Benedict Holland

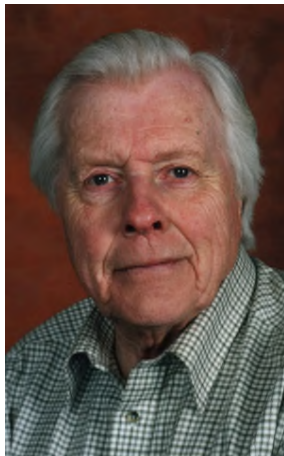




Ranald McCusker

Sir John Manduell

Former principal of the
Royal Northern College of Music
Mentor and supporter



The organ

The Holy Name organ was built in 1871 by William Hill and Son and features 48 speaking stops on three manuals and pedals. It was completely rebuilt in 1926 by Wadsworths and is currently maintained by David Wells who carried out a restoration in 2004.

The instrument is situated at the west end of Holy Name's nave and is a striking focal point with its brightly coloured lead pipes on the front of the case. During the recent restoration these were restored to their original colour scheme of red and green with gold motifs. Two golden angels sit over the organ and choir loft.

Organ specification

Great

Double Open Diapason 16'
Open Diapason No. 1 8'
Open Diapason No. 2 8'
Gamba 8'
Stopped Diapason 8'
Principal 4'
Harmonic Flute 4'
Twelfth 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Fifteenth 2'
Full Mixture 4 ranks
Sharp Mixture 3 ranks
Posaune 8'
Clairon 4'

Choir (unenclosed)

Leiblich Bourdon 16'
Open Diapason 8'
Gedackt 8'
Salicional 8'
Dulciana 8'
Gemshorn 8'
Lieblich Flute 4'
Flautino 2'
Corno di Bassetto 16'
Clarinet 8'
Tuba 8'

Swell

Tremulant
Bourdon 16'
Open Diapason 8'
Rohr Flute 8'
Viole d'Orchestra 8'
Voix Celeste 8'
Principal 4'
Suabe Flute 4'
Fifteenth 2'
Mixture 3 ranks
Double Trumpet 16'
Horn 8'
Oboe 8'
Vox Humana 8'
Clairon 4'

Pedal

Subbass 32'
Open Diapason 16'
Violone 16'
Bourdon 16'
Principal 8'
Bass Flute 8'
Fifteenth 4'
Mixture 3 ranks
Ophicleide 16'
Trombone 16'
Generals on Swell Toe Pistons
8 General pistons and 8 chans
8 Divisionals for manuals
and pedals and 8 chans
All couplers duplicated as
thumb pistons

Couplers

Gt to Ped
Sw to Ped
Ch to Ped
Sw Oct
Sw Sub Oct
Sw Unison off
Choir Octave
Choir Sub Octave
Sw to Ch
Sw to Gt Ch to Gt
Gt and Ped Combs

The recording

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on March 12-14, 2018

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Programme notes: Simon Leach

Booklet and packaging design: Stephen Sutton, Divine Art

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Simon
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