

Traces of the White Rose

Sansara
Tom Herring conductor

Dr Alexandra Lloyd speaker
Tesni Kujore reader
James Mack reader

Introduction by Dr Alexandra Lloyd

Clara Schumann (1819–1896)
Abendfeier in Venedig (1848) · Emanuel Geibel (1815–1884)

- Fritz Hartnagel to Sophie Scholl, 23 August 1942
- Sophie Scholl to Fritz Hartnagel, 7 November 1942

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Leit uns mit deiner rechten Hand, from BWV 101 (1724)
Anon.

- From the first and second pamphlets of the White Rose
- Fritz Hartnagel to Sophie Scholl, 9 December 1942

Rudolf Mauersberger (1889–1971)
Herr, lehre doch mich (1954) · Psalm 39

- From the third and fourth pamphlets of the White Rose

Piers Connor Kennedy (b.1991)
Blessed are the peacemakers (2017)
Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, 'Woodbine Willie' (1883–1929)

- Sophie Scholl to Fritz Hartnagel, 30 December 1942

Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672)
Selig sind die Toten (1648) · Revelation 14

- Sophie Scholl to Fritz Hartnagel, 16 February 1943
- Fritz Hartnagel to Sophie Scholl, 17 February 1943
- Narration: Dr Alexandra Lloyd
- Fritz Hartnagel to Sophie Scholl, 22 February 1943

Cecilia McDowall (b.1951)
Standing as I do before God (2023)
Edith Cavell (1865–1915) and Seán Street (b.1946)

INTERVAL

Max Reger (1873–1916)
Nachtlied, from Op.138 (1914) · Petrus Herbert (1530–1571)

- From the fifth and sixth pamphlets of the White Rose
- Sophie Scholl: diary entry for 29 June 1942

Philip Moore (b.1943)
Three Prayers of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (2002):
i. Morning Prayers · Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945)

- Christoph Probst to Herta Probst, 22 February 1943
- Kurt Huber to Clara Huber, 25 March 1943

Philip Moore
ii. Prayers in Time of Distress

- Alexander Schmorell to his parents, 13 July 1943
- Kurt Huber to his family, 13 July 1943

Philip Moore
iii. Evening Prayers

- Willi Graf to his family, 12 October 1943
- Sophie Scholl to Lisa Remppis, 17 February 1943

Ethel Smyth (1858–1944)
Komm, süßer Tod (Five Sacred Part-Songs, 1882–4)
Anon.

TIMELINE

January 1933: Adolf Hitler is appointed chancellor of Germany. The Nazis seize power.

September 1939: Nazi Germany invades Poland. The Second World War begins.

May 1942: Sophie Scholl arrives in Munich to begin her university studies. Through her brother Hans Scholl she meets other future members of the White Rose resistance: Alexander Schmorell, Christoph Probst and Willi Graf. The students attend lectures by Professor Kurt Huber at the Ludwig Maximilian University.

June–July 1942: The first White Rose pamphlets are written, printed and distributed.

July 1942: Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell and Willi Graf are deployed to the Eastern Front as medics. Fritz Hartnagel is also serving on the Eastern Front.

November 1942: Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell and Willi Graf return from Russia.

January 1943: The fifth White Rose pamphlet is written, printed and distributed.

February 1943: The sixth White Rose pamphlet is written and printed.

17 February 1943: The Gestapo special commission investigating the White Rose pamphlets instructs a university professor to analyse the texts so they can find the identity of the resisters.

18 February 1943: Sophie Scholl and Hans Scholl distribute copies of the pamphlets at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. They are caught and arrested. Willi Graf is arrested later that day.

20 February 1943: Christoph Probst is arrested.

22 February 1943: Sophie Scholl, Hans Scholl and Christoph Probst are tried for crimes against the state. They are found guilty and sentenced to death. They are executed by guillotine at 5pm.

24 February 1943: Alexander Schmorell is arrested.

27 February 1943: Professor Kurt Huber is arrested. Fritz Hartnagel sends a telegram to Berlin requesting a delay to Sophie and Hans Scholl's execution. He does not yet know that they have already been executed.

13 July 1943: Alexander Schmorell and Professor Kurt Huber are executed.

12 October 1943: Willi Graf is executed.



Monument to Hans and Sophie Scholl and the White Rose at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

We know that the members of the White Rose were all highly creative and musical people – they sang in choirs, played instruments and went to concerts together. Professor Kurt Huber was also a musicologist and folksong collector. One of the key questions with the White Rose is – why them? Why was it that they could see so clearly what others could not? Why did they act when others did not?

One of the strands Dr Alexandra Lloyd has explored in her research is how music, art and culture might have helped the members of the White Rose to imagine a world beyond the regime in which they were living; how it might have led them to take political action. In early 1942, Sophie Scholl wrote:

Music softens the heart; it orders its confusion, relaxes its tension, and creates the conditions for the work of the spirit in the soul which had previously knocked in vain at its tightly sealed doors. Yes, quietly and peacefully music opens the doors of the soul...

And it's this idea – music creating the conditions for the work of the spirit – which links the texts of the White Rose to the choral music we're going to hear in this performance. The music represents their cultural imagination and also embodies their connections to each other – multiple voices working together to express their profound sense of responsibility to speak up and be heard.

A podcast series of *Traces of the White Rose* is available via Oxford University Podcasts: find it wherever you get your podcasts.

Sansara

Soprano: Fiona Fraser, Áine Smith, Charlotte La Thrope, Daisy Walford

Alto: Laura Baldwin, Bekah Nießer-Jones, Amy Lyddon

Tenor: Paul Bentley-Angell, Oscar Golden Lee, Dominic Wallis

Bass: Jack Comerford, Andrew Tipple, Ben Tomlin

Artistic Director & Conductor: Tom Herring

The White Rose (Die Weiße Rose) wrote and distributed six resistance pamphlets between June 1942 and February 1943. They did so at great personal risk, and ultimately paid for this act with their lives. The texts in tonight's programme include excerpts from the pamphlets, and also from the private correspondence of the group's members and friends. Their pamphlets are a public denunciation of Hitler and the Nazi regime, and a call to Germans to mount resistance; the letters and diaries of the White Rose members provide insight into their lives and their motivation to resist. Together, they are the traces of the White Rose.

Many of these writings have only recently been translated into English. This has been undertaken by members of the White Rose Project, a research and engagement initiative led by Dr Alexandra Lloyd at the University of Oxford. These English texts are the result of a collaborative translation process by university students around the same age as the original student White Rose resisters. The pamphlets are printed in full, alongside an introduction to the White Rose and biographical sketches of its members, in *Defying Hitler: The White Rose Pamphlets* (Bodleian Library Publishing, 2022) by Alexandra Lloyd.



Clara Schumann's *Abendfeier in Venedig* from her *Drei gemischte Chöre* is a strophic setting of text by her contemporary Emanuel Geibel. The heavenly throng – 'Des Himmels Scharen' – send their songs down through the clouds as bells ring out from earthly towers following Geibel's evocative opening 'Ave Maria!' salutation.

Rudolf Mauersberger was a German choral director and composer best known for his work as the conductor of the Dresdner Kreuzchor from 1930 until his death. Following our recording of his powerful motet 'Wie liegt die Stadt so wüst', we were pleased to discover 'Herr, lehre doch mich', a simple yet deeply moving prayer for lower voices with text from Psalm 39, best known in English as 'Lord, let me know mine end'.

Piers Connor Kennedy's 'Blessed are the peacemakers' was commissioned by the Edington Music Festival in 2017 when the festival followed a sequence of the Nine Beatitudes. 'Blessed are the peacemakers' marks the seventh Beatitude with a setting of a poignant text by the First World War poet and padre Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, AKA 'Woodbine Willie' – an affectionate moniker given to him by his troops for his generosity in handing out Woodbine cigarettes. The piece features a semi-chorus improvising a gently-ebbing sea of sound, over which the chorus declares Studdert Kennedy's bittersweet paean.

Heinrich Schütz's 'Selig sind die Toten' stands out amongst his choral repertoire for its simple yet arresting accompaniment to another powerful text. Drawing on earlier influences, Schütz marries an imitative style typical of the Renaissance with textures clearly belonging to the Baroque. In the preface to his *Geistliche Chormusik* from 1648 – in which this piece was first published – Schütz gives performers license to perform the piece with continuo or unaccompanied, a consideration for which we are most grateful.

Edith Cavell was a nurse during the First World War: in 1915, she was betrayed, arrested and charged with treason for helping wounded British, French and Belgian soldiers escape occupied Brussels. On the eve of her execution by firing squad, she famously declared, 'Patriotism is not enough: I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone'. These words were later inscribed on a statue of Cavell in St Martin's Place, next to Trafalgar Square. **Cecilia McDowall's** 'Standing as I do before God' for solo soprano and choir is a setting of Seán Street's reflection on these words and is a poignant tribute to Cavell's compassion and bravery, capturing the solemnity of her final hours in a German military prison.

Max Reger's evocative 'night song' from his *Acht geistliche Gesänger für gemischten Chor* (Eight Sacred Songs for Mixed Choir) was written in 1914 before being posthumously published in 1916. One of Reger's best-known choral pieces, *Nachtlied* captures a rare emotional intensity in its deceptively simple homophonic style. Here, perhaps more than in any piece from this late set of choral works, composed as war broke out across Europe, we get a glimpse of the composer facing his own mortality. The final proofs of the *Gesänger*, including *Nachtlied*, were found next to Reger's deathbed in Leipzig on 11 May, 1916.

Punctuating the sequence of last letters is **Philip Moore's** *Three Prayers of Dietrich Bonhoeffer – Morning Prayers, Prayers in Time of Distress and Evening Prayers*. Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran pastor and outspoken critic of the Nazi regime. In April 1943 – the year Philip Moore was born – Bonhoeffer was arrested and imprisoned until his execution on 9 April, 1945, just two weeks before the concentration camp was liberated by the Allies. It was during this time that he wrote these prayers alongside poetry, prose and letters. Moore's vivid and arresting settings capture the often stark contrasts in tone from rapturous faith to frank and honest depictions of human frailty. The final piece of the triptych incorporates one of Bonhoeffer's favourite hymns for Advent, the chorale 'Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland', initially presented in polyphony before concluding with an understated chorale.

Ethel Smyth's 'Komm, süßer Tod' is one of *Five Sacred Part-Songs Based on Chorale Tunes* written during her time in Leipzig when she met both Johannes Brahms and Clara Schumann. In contrast to a chordal texture of a chorale, Smyth uses the melody line to build a haunting four-part polyphony with the choral tune in the sopranos and surprising twists and turns throughout. This approach creates a sense of parity to the music, giving expressive profile to each of the lower three voice parts in equal measure and allowing the text to be repeated throughout each phrase, in turn increasing the poignancy of this plea for a peaceful final rest.

Tom Herring