



Photo Credit: Andy Holdsworth

Composer Profile: Will Todd (b. 1970)

Will Todd is a British composer and jazz pianist, best known for combining jazz and blues with traditional choral music.

He was born in County Durham, North East England where his grandfather was a coal miner and his parents were teachers.

He taught himself the piano from a young age and attended Durham School on a full music scholarship, and was awarded a scholarship by the Stanley Picker Trust to study music at the University of Bristol; where he went on to receive a 'Highly Commended' MMus.

His love of improvising has been the central force in a wide-ranging career of composing and playing.

Will has a wide range of musical styles and genres; from jazz to contemporary liturgical music, opera, musical theatre and orchestral music.

And has worked with many of the UK's leading music organisations including Welsh National Opera, Opera North, The Halle Orchestra, Opera Holland Park, The Sixteen, The BBC Singers and the BBC Concert Orchestra.

His love of choral music is reflected in a large output; including masses, anthems and larger sacred concert works – most notably *Mass in Blue* (2003), which has been performed hundreds of times around the world since its 2003 premiere.

In his choral jazz music, he is able to juxtapose strong rhythmic drive and rich harmonies with exquisitely lyrical vocal lines.

Other additions to the jazz choral catalogue include his *Jazz Misa Brevis*, *Footprints Choral Suite* and *Songs of Peace* to name but a few. His innovative *Jazz Carols* are featured regularly in choral Christmas concerts.

His anthem *The Call of Wisdom* was commissioned by St Paul's Cathedral for the Diamond Jubilee Thanksgiving Service 2012 and performed in front of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and broadcast to millions around the world.

The single reached no. 3 in the UK iTunes Classical Songs chart. The album features award-winning choir Tenebrae with the English Chamber Orchestra and was Classic FM's 'CD of the week'.

His carol *My Lord Has Come* has become a worldwide favourite since it was included in Oxford University Press's Carols for Choirs Five in 2012.

Todd's jazz influenced arrangement of the Christian hymn, *Amazing Grace* written for the choir of St Martin-in-the-Fields, London was performed at President Obama's Inauguration Day prayer service at St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington DC 2013.

He performed *Amazing Grace* at the Nelson Mandela Thanksgiving Service, broadcast live on BBC Radio in a live link up with choirs in Sophiatown, South Africa.

Will also has an impressive list of theatre works including *The Screams of Kitty Genovese*, produced most recently by Tête à Tête Opera in London and Edinburgh, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for Opera Holland Park, *Migrations* for Welsh National Opera and *Song of our Heartland*, commissioned by Opera North.

Todd is president of a number of UK choirs and Chair of the Durham Music Trust, supporting the work of the Durham Music Service. He strongly believes in music making for all, and his personal motto when directing choirs is 'find the passion'.

Outside music his interests include supporting the environmental movement in any way he can, and he is planning to phase out his use of flying during the next few years.

"Will Todd is a master of his craft...his scores allow classically trained singers to enter the worlds of jazz and gospel without feeling self-conscious or out of their comfort zone." – Choir & Organ