

Working with Dobrinka Tabakova



<http://www.trurocathedral.org.uk/news/working-with-dobrinka-tabakova>

About eighteen months ago, we received a grant from Arts Council England to work with the composer Dobrinka Tabakova. I was confident that this would yield some powerful new music which the cathedral choir would have the privilege of premiering, but it has gone far beyond that – as with lots of the most successful partnerships, a sort of resonance has occurred, with unforeseen benefits. It has been a joy to welcome Dobrinka to Truro on various occasions, and I have admired the care she has taken in getting to know our choral sound and the nature of our cathedral community and acoustic before putting pen to paper.

At our Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on 23rd December 2016, we gave the first performance of “Of a rose sing we” which was the first work Dobrinka wrote for us as part of our collaboration. In February 2017, she gave us a new Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis which we performed live on BBC Radio 3 the following month. Fast-forward to now, and we are working towards a full CD recording of Dobrinka’s music in late May, having enjoyed getting several of her established works into our repertoire (most notably “Praise”, composed for St Paul’s Cathedral Choir, and “Alma Redemptoris Mater”, composed for Merton College, Oxford).

On our way to that CD recording, which will mark the end of the funded project, the choir will be performing a special concert on Friday 11th May at 7.30pm with the BBC Concert Orchestra and around one hundred students from local secondary schools. Dobrinka is Composer-in-Residence with the BBC Concert Orchestra and this link has been the starting point for their visit. She will write a new fifteen-minute work for the concert, all of which will be broadcast on BBC Radio 3. She has chosen, as her text, “Kynance Cove” by the nineteenth-century Cornish poet John Harris – I will be fascinated to see how she captures in her music something of that beautiful place as seen through John Harris’s evocative words. The concert will feature other music about nature and God’s creation, including arrangements of the folksongs “Shenandoah” and “Londonderry Air”, as well as Jonathan Dove’s “Seek him that maketh the seven stars” and Philip Moore’s “All wisdom cometh from the Lord”. Do join us in person if you can, or on Radio 3/iPlayer, to hear the culmination of this special relationship between cathedral, composer, orchestra and community.

Christopher Gray, Truro Cathedral's director of music.

Being the composer-in-residence with Truro Cathedral



<http://www.trurocathedral.org.uk/news/being-composer-in-residence-with-truro-cathedral>

I am writing this on the train back from the final workshops with three schools in Truro and my thoughts turn to how the connection with Truro started and the beginnings of a very fruitful collaboration. Since September 2016, at the invitation of the Director of Music at Truro Cathedral- Christopher Gray, and

following a successful Arts Council grant, I have had the great pleasure of being the resident composer at Truro Cathedral. In preparation for the residency I came to hear the Cathedral Choir's Nine Lessons and Carols in December 2015, and only a year later, the first piece which I wrote- *Of a Rose Sing we*, for the Cathedral Choir was in that same historical service. Over this time, I have enjoyed getting to know the choir and the excellent girl choristers. I was very happy that my first Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis was created during this residency- the *Truro Canticles*, which were included in Radio 3's live Evensong from the Cathedral on 8th March in 2017.

For the final work, I wanted to bring a stronger Cornish connection to the piece and set out to look for suitable text. One of my earlier works- *On the South Downs*, for choir orchestra and solo cello became the inspiration for the type of mood and text for the new Cornish work. I remembered reading about the life of John Harris and thought his descriptive nature poems would fit the image I had in mind for this new work.

At the early stages of preparation for this project, I was invited to become composer-in-residence with the BBC Concert Orchestra, and an idea began to form- to try and bring together the two groups who I am associated with- Truro Cathedral and BBC Concert Orchestra.

As well as the orchestra and Cathedral Choir, another aspect to this work is the involvement of local school choirs. Truro High School for Girls, Truro School and Richard Lander Schools have all been extremely welcoming and enthusiastic about this project. During my first visit to all three schools, the work wasn't completed, and I spent the workshop talking about some compositional tools and playing extracts from piano etudes. Choral Scholars from Truro Cathedral joined us and performed some close harmony songs. Today's workshop was spent talking about writing for the voice and singing the completed Cornish work- *Kynance Cove*.

The culmination of all this work is now fast approaching. The new work- *Kynance Cove*, together with the earlier *On the South Downs* will be performed at Truro Cathedral, with BBC Concert Orchestra, choirs from the three schools and cellist Natalie Clein, bringing the downs and the cove to the grand cathedral. The works will be recorded by Radio 3, and will also form part of the profile album CD, which will be released towards the end of the year.

The train has just passed Teignmouth and one of my favourite parts of this train journey is about to be revealed- an endless view of the sea. This has been such a special residency and I am sure every time I make this journey I will be reminded of my time in Truro.

Dobrinka Tabakova

(photo credit: Candide Rietdijk)