Ben Rowarth

Composer

Ben Rowarth, known for his “cutting edge polyphony” (*Classical Source*), has received commissions and performances from leading choirs and institutions including the BBC Singers, The Tallis Scholars, I Fagiolini, The Marian Consort, Merton College Oxford, York Minster, The Tower of London and London Festival of Contemporary Church Music. Rowarth has also composed soundtracks for live theatre, documentaries, fine art exhibitions, and short films; most recently, he composed and arranged for BBC’s *The Travel Show*.

Upcoming projects include a commission from Siglo De Oro for a large-scale choral work entitled *The Fall,* premiering at Wigmore Hall in July 2025. Directed by Patrick Allies, and with a libretto by writer and film director Sophia Carr-Gomm, *The Fall* will use voices, cello and electronics to bring to life the myth of the Trojan horse and the self-destructive nature of humanity. Rowarth has also written the soundtrack for Carr-Gomm's new film *Return,*which will be released in 2025. Following the premiere of a work for award winning mezzo-soprano Helen Charlston and lutenist Toby Carr at Purbeck Music Festival 2024 (with repeat performances at York Early Music Festival and Barnes Music Festival), the 2025/26 season features a new commission for Charlston and In Echo Ensemble.

Recent highlights include two new Christmas carols: *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (2023) for choir and organ commissioned by the Huddersfield Choral Society, and *The Shepherd Girl* (2022) for choir commissioned by the Tower of London. Rowarth’s New Year Carol (2022) was commissioned and performed by the Cathedral Singers of Christ Church, Oxford. For the Fallen (2018) and Night Prayer (2018) were performed by the BBC Singers in November 2021, conducted by Sofi Jeannin. Rowarth was commissioned to write for Charlston and Michael Craddock’s album *The Isolation Songbook*, for which he wrote *The King’s Breakfast* (2021), a piece which was hailed as the “stand out” of the album (*Musicweb International*). Vocal ensemble I Fagiolini commissioned Rowarth’s *Deus Venerunt Gentes* in 2021, the premiere of which featured actress Tamsin Greig as Narrator.

Major works include The Short Walk of a Madman (2021), an extended eight-voice work commissioned and recorded by The Fieri Consort; it engages with issues of immigration, belonging and mental health whilst pushing the boundaries of technical writing for vocal ensembles. The work was used as a soundtrack to the silent film *The Short Walk*, directed by Carr-Gomm. In 2022, acclaimed vocal ensemble The Marian Consort commissioned *The World Around Us*, an educational project in which primary schools around the UK helped to create and perform a new work that reflects on climate, recycling, and renewal. The piece received its world premiere as part of Dunster Festival in May 2022. Rowarth enjoys an ongoing relationship with The Marian Consort, who previously commissioned *Ave Maris Stella* for the 2021 Dunster Festival.

Rowarth’s music has featured on recordings by Helen Charlston, The Marian Consort, ORA Singers, Fieri Consort, Rodolfus Choir, and Khoros. Rowarth’s work has also received regular broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, notably by The Tallis Scholars.

Rowarth began his musical life as a chorister at Hexham Abbey, where he later went on to sing bass and became Organ Scholar from 2009 to 2010. Following undergraduate and postgraduate music degrees at Durham and York universities respectively, Rowarth went on to win the NCEM Composers Award (2012) and Leeds International Film Festival Best Documentary Soundtrack (2013). Rowarth also performs regularly as a bass-baritone, both as a soloist and in leading UK ensembles including Britten Sinfonia, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, I Fagiolini and the BBC Singers. He lives in London and teaches composition at Oxford University.

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