

16 MAY

Robert Hugill *The Woodward Scale* (London Concord Singers, Malcolm Cottle, conductor, Christ Church, Uxbridge UB8 1SZ, 7.30pm)

Brian Elias *Doubles* (BBC Symphony Orchestra, Jiří Bělohlávek, conductor, Barbican, London, 7.30pm)

Gabriel Jackson *In the beginning was the word* (Merton College Chapel Choir, Peter Phillips, conductor, Merton College Chapel, Oxford, 6pm)

Paul Stanhope *Exile Lamentations* (The Elysian Singers, Sam Laughton, conductor, St Pancras Church, London, 8pm)

17 MAY

Alan Rawsthorne String quartet of 1935 (Bridge String Quartet, Ely Cathedral, 6pm)

James MacMillan *Jubilate Deo* (Wells Cathedral Choir, Jonathan

Vaughn, organ, Matthew Owens, conductor, Wells Cathedral, 3pm)

Kenneth Hesketh *PatterSongs for orchestra* (Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, Matthew Wood, conductor, Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, 7.30pm)

20 MAY

Jörg Widmann *XI Humoresken* (UK premiere, Yefim Bronfman, piano, Wigmore Hall, 7.30pm)

Tom Wiggall *Alban* (Cast includes Philip Salmon, tenor, as Alban, Dominique Thiébaud, soprano, as Claudia, Des Turner, bass-baritone, as Lucius and Paul Sheehan, baritone, as the Priest, massed local choirs, David Ireson, conductor, St Albans Cathedral, 7.30pm)

22 MAY

Joe Duddell Duo for trumpet and marimba (UK premiere, Håkan

Hardenberger, trumpet, Colin Currie, percussion, Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, 7.30pm)

23 MAY

Bob Chilcott *Salisbury Vespers* (More than 500 singers from choirs local to Salisbury, Salisbury Symphony Orchestra, David Halls, conductor, Salisbury Cathedral, 7.30pm)

Gavin Bryars *St Brendan arrives at the Promised Land of the Saints* (Oakham School Chapel Choir, Martin Cropper, violin, Ivan Linford, organ, Peter Davis, conductor, Oakham School Chapel, 10.30am)

24 MAY

David Fennessy *BIG LUNG* (Kevin Bowyer, organ, Tom de Cock, percussion, Asuka Hatanaka, percussion, Church of the Holy Rude, Stirling, 7pm)

27 MAY

Isidora Zebeljan *Polomka Quartet* (University of Kent commission, Brodsky Quartet, Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury, 7.45pm)

Jörg Widmann *Antiphon für Orchestergruppen* (UK premiere, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Andris Nelsons, conductor, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, 7.30pm)

28 MAY

Jennifer Higdon Violin Concerto (UK premiere, Hilary Hahn, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Vasily Petrenko, Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, 7.30pm)

29 MAY

David Flynn *Tar Éis Caoineadh* (Ioana Petcu-Colan, violin, Trinity College Chapel, Dublin 2, 8pm)

PREMIERE OF THE FORTNIGHT

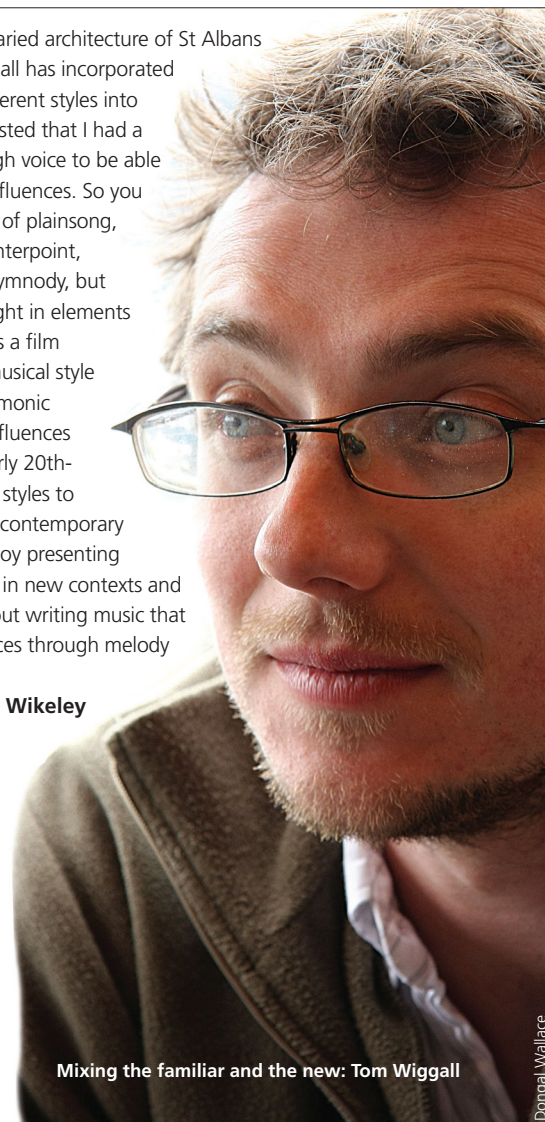
St George: patron saint of England. Yet for a while there has been a quiet campaign to replace him with someone who actually trod these shores – and St Alban is top of many people's list. Tom Wiggall's community opera *Alban* traces the events leading up to his martyrdom and is a central part of the 1,800th-anniversary celebrations of the event. The drama is set in the Britain of the Emperor Severus, a renowned persecutor of Christians. Alban, a well-respected doctor in the town, takes in a fugitive priest, Amphibalus, who over time converts Alban to Christianity. Eventually the priest's position is given away, but when the mob comes to Alban's house to take the priest away, Alban swaps clothes with Amphibalus and is led away to be put to death in his place. It is not only a powerful story but, says Wiggall: 'it's also important to remember that the opera is an intimate love story: it's about two people – Alban and his wife – who get separated by faith. It's just one of the aspects of the opera that has interested me: that Alban's martyrdom is not one sole, glorious sacrifice, but also involves many other rejections and sacrifices on the part of his family and friends.'

The opera will be premiered at St Albans Cathedral and will make innovative use of the space: 'At first it was going to be a mobile opera, but as the project grew that became unfeasible. Now, though the audience stays in the same place, the drama will unfold around them – an immersive operatic experience. The organisers were keen to have lots of performers on lots of levels – it's very much a community opera. Although a lot of the drama in the opera is intensely private, much of it takes place in the public sphere. So as well as internationally regarded opera singers we have a children's chorus running through the crowd selling dormice, market traders hawking their wares, shouting mobs and everything in between. There are two choruses: a smaller choir of 20 or so singers drawn from the St Albans opera society and elsewhere, and a massed choir of around 100 singers drawn from church choirs within the diocese. There are a host of smaller roles taken on by local actors and singers – and of course there are at least as many people offstage as there are on; all local people giving their time and skills. The audience will also be a part of the action – part of Alban's journey.'

Just like the varied architecture of St Albans Cathedral, Wiggall has incorporated a number of different styles into his writing. 'I trusted that I had a distinctive enough voice to be able to unite these influences. So you can find aspects of plainsong, renaissance counterpoint, psalmody and hymnody, but I have also brought in elements from my work as a film composer. My musical style is essentially harmonic and draws on influences ranging from early 20th-century national styles to minimalism and contemporary film genres. I enjoy presenting familiar material in new contexts and feel strongly about writing music that engages audiences through melody and harmony.'

Jonathan Wikeley

Tom Wiggall's community opera *Alban* will be premiered in St Albans Cathedral on 20 May, with further performances on 21, 22 and 23 May.



Mixing the familiar and the new: Tom Wiggall

Dongal Wallace