

New music for St Giles' 900th anniversary will be performed on Saturday

On 28 October a new choral work commissioned as part of the 900th birthday celebrations at St Giles will be performed.

The new Missa brevis, or short mass, composed by Helen Grimes will be performed for the first time in St Giles' which is believed to have been founded by King David 1 in 1124. This is the fourth of five new works released annually since 2020. Each lasts around 15 minutes and the compositions will form a collective choirbook. This format accords with hundreds of years of sacred music associated with the historic kirk.

Michael Harris, Master of the Music at St Giles', said: "A choirbook has various connotations, because it can just be a collection of pieces, or part books for singers.

"There are some famous Mediaeval and Renaissance examples but there was also one for the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen which was done nationally.

"I have been always quite keen on expanding the repertoire of music composed by Scottish composers for the Church.

"So this seemed a good thing to do for such a momentous occasion as the 900th anniversary of the founding of St Giles'."

Due to the Scottish Reformation in 1560, when the Church of Scotland moved away from accompanied singing during services

until the 19th century, Mr Harris is only the fourth person in his role, with very few records surviving of the music from when St Giles' was a Catholic place of worship.



Michael Harris Photo courtesy of The Church of Scotland

Ms Grime, who has an international career as a composer but is originally from Edinburgh, said: "It's a huge honour to be taking part in this celebration of St Giles Cathedral's 900th anniversary.

"As someone who grew up singing in the choir of Old Saint Paul's, not far from Saint Giles', choral music has always resonated deeply for me.

"I can't think of a better setting for my first major sacred choral work."

Rev Dr George Whyte, Interim Moderator of St Giles', said: "This commission shows how a musical tradition can be continuously renewed and refreshed.

"The Missa brevis is a gift from St Giles' to the wider Church and is a generous way of marking the passing of this milestone on the long journey of the worshipping congregation."

St Giles' has been at the centre of many historic events ranging from the riot in 1637 against the Book of Common prayer which was one of the catalysts of the War of the Three Kingdoms, to the vigil for Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth in 2022 when she lay at rest in the Cathedral.

Details of more events relating to the 900th anniversary celebrations of St Giles' are on their website.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sounds-on-saturday-st-giles-cathedral-choir-tickets-711216727377?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>



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