

Hexham Abbey

The Lawrence Phelps Organ – 50th anniversary recording
Andriessen Bach Bridge Clérambault Howells Vierre

Michael Haynes
BASE2 MUSIC





Michael Haynes

CD Track List

1. Fantasia in C minor: BWV 562 J.S Bach.....	3:54
2. Master Tallis's Testament: H.Howells.....	5:33
3. Trio Sonata No. 6 in G major: I. Vivace BWV 530 J.S Bach..	4:21
4. Trio Sonata No. 6 in G major: II. Lento.....	3:48
5. Trio Sonata No. 6 in G major: III. Allegro.....	4:08
6. Choral Prelude Liebster Jesu: BWV 731 J.S Bach.....	2:54
7. Suite du deuxième ton: I. Plein jeu L-N Clérambault.....	2:14
8. Suite du deuxième ton: II. Duo.....	1:34
9. Suite du deuxième ton: III. Trio.....	2:15
10. Suite du deuxième ton: IV. Basse de Cromorne.....	1:33
11. Suite du deuxième ton: V. Flûtes.....	2:43
12. Suite du deuxième ton: VI. Récit de Nazard.....	2:40
13. Suite du deuxième ton: VII. Caprice sur les grands jeux...	2:02
14. Adagio in E major: F.Bridge	5:22
15. Trio Sonata No. 2 in C minor: I. Vivace BWV 526 J.S Bach..	4:01
16. Trio Sonata No. 2 in C minor: II. Largo.....	3:10
17. Trio Sonata No. 2 in C minor: III. Allegro.....	4:00
18. Variations on a Theme: H.Andriessen.....	5:26
19. 24 pièces en style libre: No. 15, Arabesque L.Vierne.....	4:59

Total Duration: 66:43

Fantasia in C minor, BWV 562 – J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

A solemn and splendid work in the French style, with abundant ornamentation and imitation. This recording shows off the splendid Organo Pleno of the Phelps organ.

Master Tallis's Testament – Herbert Howells (1892–1983)

A set of variations on a theme paying homage to the wonderful English composer Thomas Tallis (c.1505–1585). The work has both an ancient and modern feel, and builds to a tremendous climax before subsiding into tranquillity.

Trio Sonata No. 6 in G major – J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

Vivace
Lento
Allegro

In the Vivace movement I have used some lovely foundation stops, and the Lento movement includes the Cromorne and the weighty Pedal Principal 16' (from the front of the organ case). The last movement employs a suitably cheerful combination including the Swell Doublette 2'.

Chorale Prelude: Liebster Jesu, BWV 731 – J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

Perhaps the most beloved of all Bach's short hymn preludes. While it lacks the intricate contrapuntal complexity and emotional depth of his more renowned works, it possesses a sense of spiritual calm and profound certainty.

Suite du deuxième ton – Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1676–1749)

Contemporary with J. S. Bach, both of Clérambault's suites are superlative examples of the genre. Plein Jeu – employing the mixture choruses of each manual
Duo – the Great Cornet is heard here
Trio – in this case Swell 8' & 2' in dialogue with Great 8' & 4'
Basse de Cromorne – the angular left-hand theme is played on the inimitable Cromorne
Flûtes – separate and combined flute colours
Récit de Nazard – two different Nazard combinations which have a unique harmonic property and very distinctive sonority.

Caprice sur les Grands Jeux – a majestic fugal movement on the reeds and cornets, a characteristic sound of Baroque French organs, and one which continued into the 19th and 20th centuries.

Adagio in E major – Frank Bridge (1879–1941)

A lovely work in a Romantic idiom. The structure is an arch shape, and the initial crescendo is heightened by fugal characteristics and chromaticism.

Trio Sonata No. 2 in C minor – J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

Vivace
Largo
Allegro

One of six Trio Sonatas – musical masterpieces of the organ repertoire, which stand not only as benchmarks of composition but also as technical targets for any organist. In the Vivace movement I have used an 8', 4' and Nasard combination for the right hand. In the Largo movement, the tremulant is heard with some added ornamentation. The last movement employs some slightly daring reed stops!

Variations on a Theme – Hendrik Andriessen (1892–1981)

A grand piece which indulges in wonderfully rich and sustained harmonies, packed with suspensions (a favourite device of organ composers). The moods and textures vary, and I have adjusted some of the bar lengths to unify the piece. The recap of the opening theme is a thrilling moment.

Arabesque – Louis Vierne (1870–1937)

From a collection of relatively short pieces in every possible mood and key. This one has a distinctly impressionistic feel, employing whole-tone scales. It could easily be a flute piece by Debussy.

Hendrik Andriessen

Johann Sebastian Bach

Frank Bridge

Louis-Nicolas Clérambault

Louis Vierne



Photo above and left: Detail of wall and small altar in the abbey's Roman crypt.

Photos opposite:
Above – the north transept.
Below – Thomas of Tyndale, an early 14th-century knight, dressed in mail, with his feet resting on a lion.



A Personal Reflection:

During my teenage years (in the late 1970s) I became aware of the Neo-Baroque Organ trend in Britain. Inspired by the series of books, *The Classical Organ in Britain*, I dreamed of playing these instruments and, over the past four or five decades, have enjoyed doing so. Hexham Abbey, with its unique Phelps Organ, has consistently stood out from the crowd. It has received continuous praise over the past half-century, and the visitors' book is signed by many internationally renowned performers.

It was decided that a new organ was needed for 1974, which would be the 1300th anniversary of the foundation of Hexham Abbey, and was marked by a visit from Queen Elizabeth II. Not only was it a challenge to place such a large tracker organ on the medieval screen in Hexham Abbey, but it is also essentially a three-manual organ crammed into two manuals. However the voicing, blend, versatility, tone, and timbre continue to delight. Although it excels at playing early French and English repertoire, it is astonishingly good for Bach, remarkably proficient in the French, German, and English Romantic periods, stunning for modern music, and seems to possess an extraordinary eclecticism.

I have been fortunate to have a strong association with the Hexham Abbey Phelps for half of its lifetime and have heard some wonderful performances on it. We have just celebrated its Golden Anniversary. It has always amazed me how visiting recitalists take a bow and then also gesture towards the Phelps organ—as if it is equally deserving of applause. I think it is. I sincerely hope that there will be many more hymns, anthems, concerts, recitals, recordings, and broadcasts played on this magnificent survivor from the 1970s. Most organists long to have an additional stop on their instrument, but I have never felt that. It is a very special instrument.

Michael Haynes

Michael is Director of Music at Hexham Abbey, having previously held similar positions at The University Church in Cambridge and St Chad's College, Durham. He has conducted many choral CDs and this is his 3rd solo organ CD. He examined for ABRSM for 27 years. He also works as a freelance recitalist, accompanist and teacher. Music has given Michael opportunities to travel around Europe, South East Asia and the USA. He has given organ recitals in King's College Cambridge, Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral.

Director of Music, Hexham Abbey 2000-2011
Assistant Organist, Hexham Abbey 2015-2017
Director of Music, Hexham Abbey 2017-present day

Biography:

Michael Haynes studied at the Birmingham Conservatoire, the Royal Academy of Music and Newcastle University, and holds an MMus degree and the FRCO(CHM) diploma. His organ teachers have included Peter Hurford and Dame Gillian Weir.

He held Organ Scholarships at St Alban's Cathedral and Winchester College, and various teaching posts including Clifton College and Roedean School.

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Hexham Abbey – Summary adapted from: The Buildings of England - Northumberland, by N. Pevsner.

Hexham Abbey owes its origins to St Wilfrid, who around 675–80 built a church renowned throughout early Northumbria for its magnificence. Although Wilfrid's building has long disappeared above ground, its crypt remains almost completely intact – one of the most evocative survivals of early Christian England. Constructed from reused Roman stone, it contains a relic chamber, narrow vaulted passages, and small chambers approached by separate stairways for clergy and laity. The ancient plaster still remarkably hard and white, has endured for over thirteen centuries. Excavations have revealed the curve of the Saxon apse and traces of the early foundations.

Hexham became the seat of a bishop in 681, but Viking raids in 876 brought destruction. The monastery lay desolate until 1113, when it was refounded as an Augustinian priory. The present church was largely rebuilt between about 1180 and 1250 in the new Gothic style, with further additions and restorations carried out from 1850 to 1910.

At the east end, facing the Market Place, stands the Victorian Gothic front by John Dobson (1858). His design replaced a more intricate medieval arrangement of five small chapels. Behind it, the chancel walls still preserve 12th- and 13th-century lancet windows and delicate shafting. The central tower, moderate in height, keeps the form of its late-13th-century bell openings and battlements, though much of the stonework has been renewed.

The south transept includes an east aisle and, unusually, a slype occupying its southern bay – the vaulted passage that once linked the cloister with the chapter house. Its lower windows are plain lancets; the upper ones are framed by semi-octagonal buttresses similar to those at Brinkburn Priory. The nave, added by Temple Moore in 1907–09, is designed in a restrained Decorated Gothic that harmonises naturally with the medieval work. Some lower masonry in the west front and along the north plinth may belong to the Saxon or Norman phases.

The north transept reflects the southern one but is richer and more



elaborate, with taller lancets clustered shafts, and tripartite arcades echoing those of the chancel clerestory. Its decoration includes dog-tooth ornament and finely carved capitals. The eastern and transeptal portions formed the monastic church, while the lay congregation worshipped separately at nearby St Mary's.

Inside, the chancel — begun around 1180 — consists of five bays divided by strong clustered piers with moulded capitals. The south arcade appears slightly earlier in style than the north. The aisles are covered by ribbed vaults with carved bosses, supported on simple corbels. Above runs a gallery of paired arches enriched with quatrefoils, and the clerestory contains groups of trefoiled windows with an internal wall passage. The 15th-century timber roof is ornamented with carved bosses, and the crossing stands on massive clustered piers that define the heart of the building.

In the south transept, the slype forms a vaulted corridor beneath one bay, while the broad night stair rises here to the dormitory once located above. The aisle's triple-chamfered arches and clustered piers show the mature style of the later 13th century. The north transept, slightly later, has walls lined with arcading filled with quatrefoils and foliage; its vaults have carved bosses, and its 15th-century timber roofs survive above.

Hexham preserves an exceptional collection of medieval fittings. The square Perpendicular font stands in the north aisle. The 15th-century choir stalls have lively misericords carved with animals foliage, and comic figures. In the south transept, Lescheman's Chantry (1440) is among the finest small chapels in northern England, its openwork stone screens, ogee arches, and lierne-ribbed vault richly decorated with bosses. The sedilia and piscina (c. 1220) in the chancel are elegant Early English carvings, while the late-14th-century Easter Sepulchre displays a canopied ogee arch and panelled sides. Victorian additions include Sir George Gilbert Scott's oak pulpit (1870) and Temple Moore's alabaster reredos (1899), both carefully integrated with the older fabric.

The monastic buildings lay south of the nave. The line of the cloister can still be traced, with blocked doorways leading into the slype and the chapter house. The slype itself remains barrel-vaulted in three bays with plain chamfered ribs. The chapter house, square and rib-vaulted in four bays, has an ornate doorway with stiff-leaf capitals and a triple east window. Above were the treasury and dormitory, reached by the night stair from the transept. Farther south stood the refectory, whose doorway to the cloister and reading pulpit survive. Beyond lay the warming house, kitchens, and service courts — now lost, but their outlines linger in the priory precinct walls.

Opposite: A large 2000 year old Tombstone of Flavinus, a Roman standard-bearer, and the night stairs.





Hexham Abbey holds one of the country's largest surviving collections of medieval painted wooden panels — a rare treasure as many similar works in churches were lost during the Reformation under Henry VIII. The most renowned of these is the 'Dance of Death' (below), dating from the 15th century, a striking example of the intricate artistry of the period.

Another notable piece is the Triptych (left) thought to have formed part of the original design of the Ogle Chapel. Its central panel depicts the Saviour rising from the tomb flanked by the Virgin and Child on the left and St John the Evangelist on the right each scene richly adorned with medieval detail.

The Lawrence Phelps organ 1974 (Right)
The only example of its kind in Europe.





The east end and high altar.

Producer's Note:

Hexham and its Abbey have been an important part of my life since my grandmother, Kate Purches, moved there from Petersfield in 1979. She lived in Hexham until her death in 2014, at the age of 102, and was a devoted and active (and well remembered) member of the Abbey community throughout those years. Kate was a great music lover particularly of Rachmaninov, whom she saw play in Birmingham when she was 17.

Back in the 1980s, as a teenager, I would regularly travel north from West Sussex to Hexham to join my Grandmother and attend the town's famous annual Music Festivals—not only to hear the Abbey's wonderful organ, but also to enjoy the many other excellent concerts, one, in 1991 I still have samples of on a DAT tape I discretely recorded.

As this recording marks the tenth Super Audio CD production for Base2 Music, it felt fitting to return to Hexham. When I approached Michael Haynes, the Titular Organist of the Abbey, not only was he most enthused, I discovered that last year was the 50th anniversary of the Phelps organ and the 1350th anniversary of the abbey. It seemed far too good an opportunity to miss.

I wish to dedicate this recording to Hexham Abbey, the people of Hexham, and to the memory of Kate Purches (1912–2014).

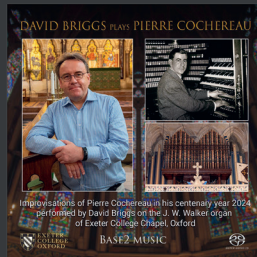
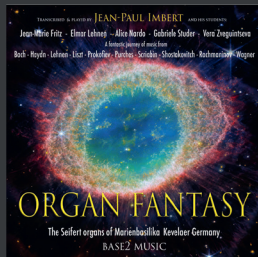
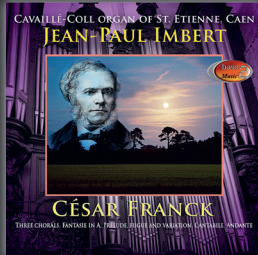
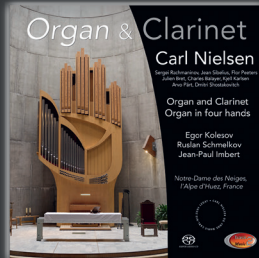
Jacob Purches - Text.





HEXHAM ABBEY ORGAN ORGAN BUILDER: LAWRENCE PHELPS 1974 (PENNSYLVANIA)

GREAT ORGAN		SWELL ORGAN		WVPEDAL ORGAN	
Stop Name	Pitch	Stop Name	Pitch	Stop Name	Pitch
Bourdon	16	Salicional	8	Principle	16
Principle	8	Voix célestes	8	Soubasse	16
Flûte à cheminée	8	Bourdon	8	Octave basse	8
Octave	4	Principle	4	Bourdon	8
Flûte conique	4	Flûte	4	Octave	4
Superoctave	2	Nasard	2 2/3	Fourniture	IV
Cornet	V	Doublette	2	Bombarde	16
Fourniture	V	Flute à bec	2	Basson	16
Trompette	8	Tierce l	1 3/5	Trompette	8
Clairon	4	Larigot	1 1/3	Chalumeau	4
		Cymbale	IV		
		Basson	16		
		Hautbois	8		
		Cromorne	8		
		(Tremulant)	-		



Credits:

Recording producer, engineer, editing and sound design: Jacob Purches
Photographs: Jacob Purches (main shots) Hexham Abbey aerial photo: Phil Barrett
Booklet design: Jacob Purches and Gary Marsh www.marshgraphicdesign.com
SACD 5.1, stereo and CD mastering: Christoph Martin Frommen

Recording location: Hexham Abbey, Hexham, Northumberland, UK
Recording dates: April 25/26 2025

I extend my thanks to Michael Haynes for his dedication, performance and assistance in the editing. Thanks also to the Rector and Churchwardens of Hexham Abbey. For Rachel Ogilvie for the accommodation and Vivid Audio UK facilities

Recorded in 11 channels surround sound at 352 kHz 32-bit DXD using Sennheiser MKH8020 series and MKH800 twin, and Neumann microphones on the Steinberg Yamaha AXR4 AD converter system
Mixed with Vivid Audio Giya G2, C1 and S12 loudspeakers and Vivid custom reaction cancelled subwoofer surround system all designed by Laurance Dickie and STAX SR-L700 electrostatic headphones with Trilogly H1 valve amplifier by Nic Poulson

Also available as a master high-definition download in DXD 32 bit in stereo and surround sound from www.base2music.store and www.nativedsd.com

This disc is CD compatible and will play in stereo on any standard CD player. For stereo high definition DSD track or DSD surround sound 5.1, use an SACD player capable of playing the Stereo or multichannel layer

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