

The Memorial Church of Harvard University
Music Notes for Sunday, September 4, 2022

The Scottish composer and conductor Sir James MacMillan is one of the pre-eminent figures of contemporary Classical music. He studied at Edinburgh and Durham universities, and has written prolifically in all genres; he is, however, most well-known for his vocal music. *Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman* was premiered by massed choirs at the outdoor Mass on September 19, 2010 at Cofton Park in Birmingham (UK), led by Pope Benedict XVI in celebration of the beatification of Cardinal Newman.

French composer and pianist Claude Debussy is regarded as one of the most influential composers of the late-19th and early-20th centuries. The *arabesques* was written when Debussy was 26 years old and characterizes his developing musical style. Following cues from the forms of French visual art, Debussy uses various modes and keys to elicit pictorial scenes.

René Clausen was conductor of the acclaimed Concordia Choir for over thirty years until his retirement in April 2020. “Set Me As a Seal” comes from the cantata *A New Creation*, and has become the composer’s most performed work.

The English composer Kenneth Leighton held university appointments at Leeds and Oxford before becoming Reid Professor of Music at Edinburgh in 1970. He is primarily remembered for his significant contribution to church music, including many organ works: *Paeon* is an energetic and dazzling work, which highlights the composer’s distinctive harmonic vocabulary.