

For all the Westminster Abbey trebles who
sang at the Coronation of King Charles III,
especially Abel and Clevan

The Westminster Service

Magnificat in G

Luke 1. 46–55

Roderick Williams

Joyous ♩ = 80 (♩ = 120)

Organ

mf *mp* *mf*

S. *mf* *leggiero*
My soul doth mag - ni - fy, my soul doth mag - ni - fy

A. *mf* *leggiero*
My soul doth mag - ni - fy, my soul doth mag - ni - fy

T. *mf* *leggiero*
My soul doth mag - ni - fy, my soul doth mag - ni - fy

B. *mf* *leggiero*
My soul doth mag - ni - fy, my soul doth mag - ni - fy

mp *mf*

Nunc Dimittis in G

Luke 2: 29-32

Relaxed $\text{♩} = 54$

mf espress.

Baritone Solo

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Organ

Relaxed $\text{♩} = 54$

10

— now let - test thou thy ser - - vant — de - part —

— Lord, — thy ser - - vant, — de - part —

ser - vant de -

- vant, — thy ser - - vant — de - part —

- vant, — thy ser - - vant — de - part —

de - part

- vant, — thy ser - - vant — ser vant de - part —

The Westminster Service

It was a particular pleasure and honour to be invited to write a new service for the choir of Westminster Abbey alongside whom I have sung on a number of occasions, including a service to commemorate the Abolition of Slavery and, of course, the Coronation of King Charles III.

My initial response to this commission was to explore how Mary, most likely a teenage girl, would have been overwhelmed to experience a visitation from an archangel, not to mention hearing the news that she would soon give birth and then that her child would change the course of history. This scenario created in my mind an almost operatic treatment, based on awe, wonder and quite some degree of fear.

However, re-reading Luke 1, I realized that Mary had some time to process this extraordinary visitation as she ran to Elizabeth's home and by the time she had reached there, a different mood had taken over her, giving her the impetus to break out into the remarkable, bold words that form the Magnificat. I was struck by the sense of joy, the sheer thrill of her realizing she had a new and wonderful purpose, and that joy is made even more ecstatic by her youth and her humble origins. It seemed natural for this joy to continue into the words spoken by the ageing Simeon, who finds the release he has been craving, finally rewarding his patience.

A further influence on my writing was the Sacred Concerts of Duke Ellington, the third of which was premiered at Westminster Abbey in 1973. Although I don't have a particular background in jazz, I did compose entire jazz choral evensong and choral matins services which were broadcast in 2006 and 2007 respectively. My desire was to write music in a jazz style that might be suitable for everyday use, to bring the sense of joy and excitement into Anglican worship that Duke Ellington's concerts suggested to me.

However, those services were written for choir and jazz piano trio and proved too complicated to incorporate into a general church setting. I hope that the Westminster Service will prove easier to manage, even though it may still test the mettle of many a choir. I also hope that the joy of singing the music will make the effort required feel worthwhile.

Roderick Williams, April 2025

*Commissioned by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster through the generosity of
Pamela Carrington, and first performed on 5 July 2025 by the Choir of
Westminster Abbey with Matthew Jorysz (organ), conducted by Andrew Nettsingha*