

## **Howard Skempton (b.1947) *Chorales and Inventions* (2025)**

**Composers note:** The set of fourteen *Chorales and Inventions* was composed in summer 2025 for William Howard. Chorales tend to alternate with Inventions, but this scheme is no more predictable than the character of individual pieces. The first is hymn-like, with the limping regularity of a sarabande, something taken up by the Invention that follows. The chorale-like opening to the third piece leads to a bell-like second part. The fourth piece is brief; really an interlude. The following Invention retains the seven-eight metre but is relatively extended, setting the tone for the rest of the cycle. Each of the so-called (ever so loosely called) Chorales serves as a foil to the Invention that follows. The eighth piece is exceptional, being a pair of pieces. The last piece - the fourteenth - is the most substantial, and eventually seems to bring the sequence full circle.

All the Inventions are three-part, thereby acknowledging the example of J S Bach. Bach's music inspires confidence by fostering humility. If Bach is a guiding light for composers, perhaps it is because the humanity, and sheer quality, of his work is such that it seems to invite us to deal with it on our own terms?

*Chorales and Inventions* was given its world premiere by William Howard in Hay-on Wye (for the Hay Music Trust) on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2025.