

LUIGI CASTIGLIONI
EDITORE

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LUIGI CASTIGLIONI EDITORE

an editorial project created by
Luigi Castiglioni

Music, for bibliophiles.

This editorial project aims to open the libraries of collectors and aesthetes to a new cult object: the score.

Luigi Castiglioni Editore is an editorial project that revolutionizes the fruition of the musical text and renders it a vehicle for the expression of autonomous creative values independent from the performative act. The score, up until this point has only been a mere instrument of study and support for musical execution. Today however, it will fully enter into the empyrean of universal literature and it will burst inside you with all the power of a language that breaks down linguistic boundaries.

This is necessary in order to unite an international audience.





Music as a sensitive experience.

The soul of sound opens up on the pentagram and takes on a physical body to be experienced by sight, touch and smell. It is an operation that transforms the musical experience into synaesthesia capable of gratifying every sense.

This change of perspective can then transform musical scores into books of art. In the construction of this work, it is particular attention to materials and typographical choices, the study of formats and graphics, and the choice to enrich the work with illustrations by renowned artists that actually create this metamorphosis.

For the first time in history, the musical text acquires dignity and autonomous value and becomes a cult object capable of igniting the desire of music lovers, bibliophiles and collectors.





An art for art.

In the vision of expert bookbinders, the crowning achievement of this process, which involves enhancing texts, is constituted by the art of binding.

This is a technique that the twentieth century interpreted with originality and expertise such as to create true works of art in the context of bibliophilia. It is no coincidence that this encounter between music and publishing took place in the atelier of Luigi Castiglioni. He is essentially a master bookbinder of international fame and a true connoisseur of contemporary classical music.



JESUS' BLOOD NEVER FAILED ME YET

by Gavin Bryars

Music

Gavin Bryars

Artist book concept and design
Luigi Castiglioni

MAKING OFF OF THE BOOK DESIGN

by **Luigi Castiglioni**

Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet is an iconic composition that Gavin Bryars has chosen to leave open and have interpreted in over a hundred versions. This book is one of them.

If the score can be played by various musical instruments, then the challenge for the composer is to perform it with typographic instruments. This is a challenge that Gavin Bryars has taken up with enthusiasm, reflecting the full extent of the sensory range that materiality can give back to us.

In my choice of techniques, materials and printing, I have let myself be guided by the idea that suggestions are revealed through senses. These are senses which are usually not included in the musical experience. They are sight, touch and even smell.

Unrestricted from the norm of classical musical notation, inks and engraved metal plates have given rise to a very personal performance that is a tribute to the fiftieth year of the composition written around the sacred anthem of the homeless.

Letterpress printed on Fabriano Tiepolo 290 gsm
by Tipoteca Italiana, Cornuda
on an original Nebiolo Atena cylinder press of 1956

The limited edition consists of one hundred and forty copies
signed by Gavin Bryars:
120 in Arabic numerals – from 1/120 to 120/120,
of which the first thirty copies contain a hand-drawn artwork by the
composer;
20 in Roman numerals – from I/XX to XX/XX

Each copy includes a vinyl long playing record
with the fragment of the religious song
played as a loop for fifty times

Printed in Italy – September, 2021

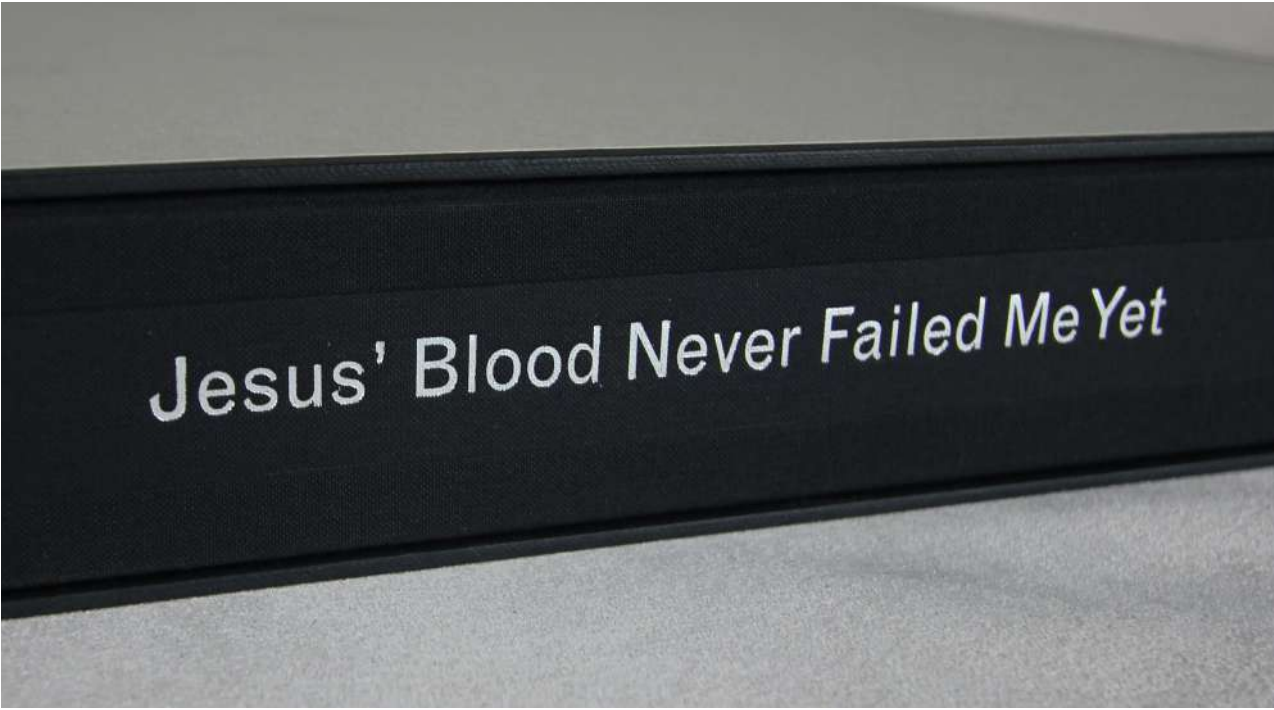
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We know almost nothing about the old homeless man who sang
this short fragment of religious song.
But what he sang, and the way that he sang it, is a testament to
his simple faith, his optimism, his humanity, and dignity in the
face of adversity.
His voice has touched countless people throughout the world and
resounds beyond his human existence.
It is over 50 years since the chance encounter that brought it to
me, yet each time I hear his voice as I start a performance, I am
as moved as I was when I heard it for the very first time.

Gavin Bryars 2021



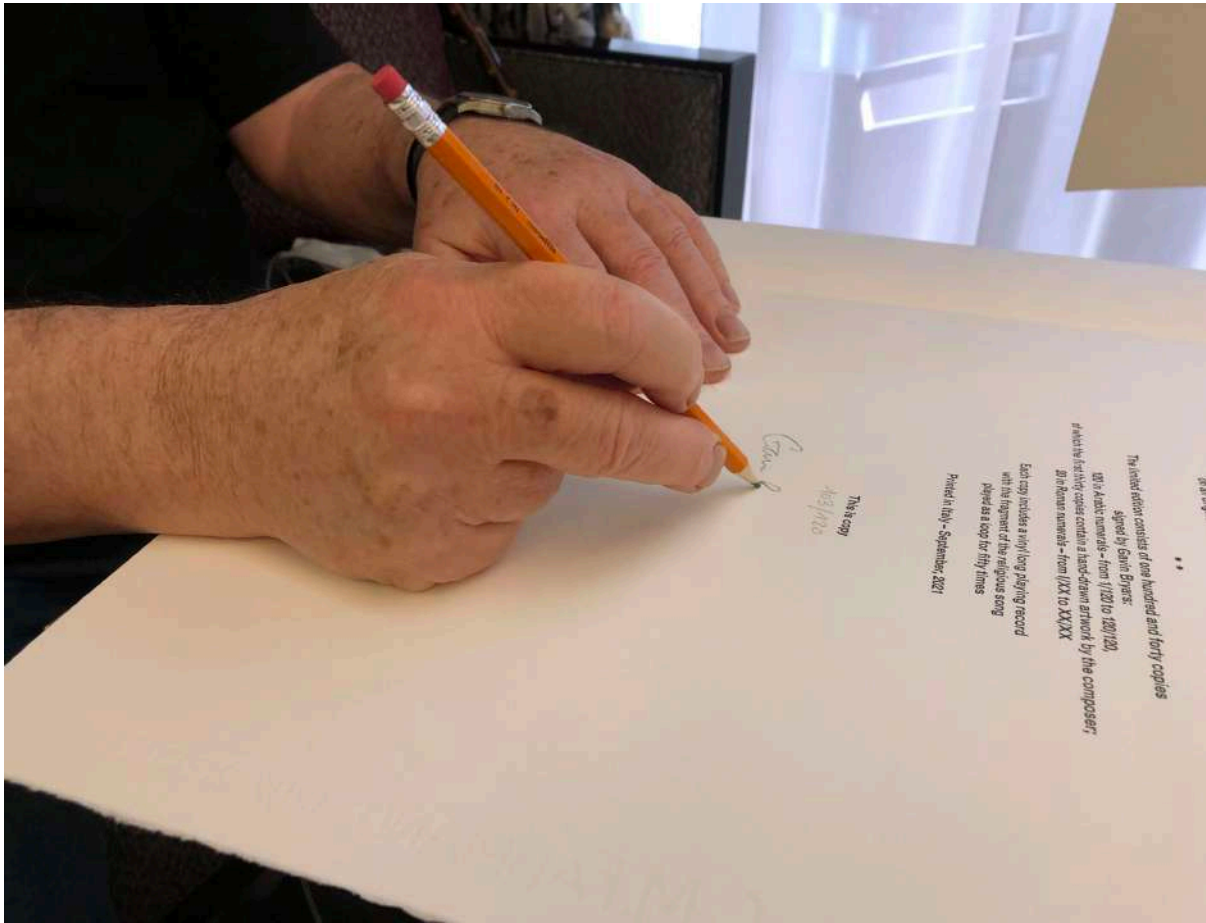








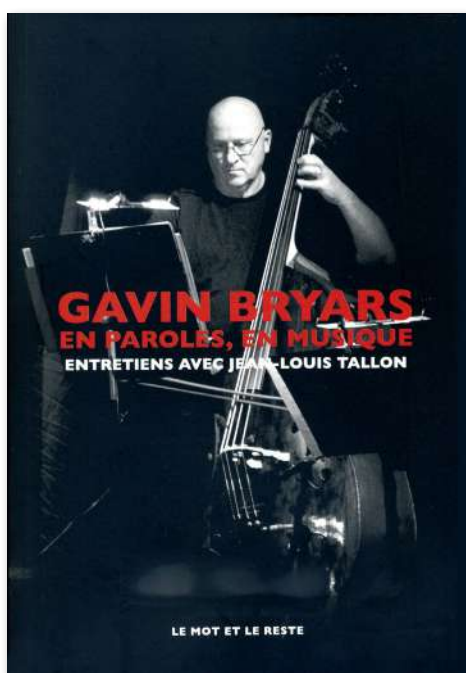




The story of « **Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet** »
by **Gavin Bryars**

Excerpt from
GAVIN BRYARS EN PAROLES EN MUSIQUE
ENTRETIENS AVEC JEAN-LOUIS TALLON

Éditions Le mot et le reste, 2020 [pages 58-66]



Also in 1971, you composed and premiered another piece that has become emblematic of your work: *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*. How did it come about?

By chance and luck. Alan Power had just made a film about the homeless who gravitated around Elephant and Castle and Waterloo Station in London. During filming, some of the homeless had drunkenly started singing, and one of them, who didn't drink, sang a song with the refrain "Jesus' blood never failed me yet". In the end, this passage was not used in the film, but as I had helped Alan with post-production, I had the opportunity to recover the original recordings, which he no longer wanted and was about to throw away. I found it so extraordinary, so touching, that I immediately thought of doing something with it, without knowing what exactly. The beginning and end of what he sang formed a loop, and as we

worked a lot with looping devices, I did the same with the recording in question and listened to it again that way. From this man's voice and from what he was singing emanated an incredible emotional force, a simple faith, a deep humanity, something unidentified. It wasn't necessarily religious. The man also had a very good sense of musicality and phrasing. Even if I had to develop something based on him, I resolutely wanted this man's singing to remain the main musical fact, always present, hovering, as it were, above the rest. My aim was not to subtract anything from him, but to add a musical framework that would accompany his voice without ever distorting it, so as to preserve all its integrity. I began to work along these lines. Having had the idea of writing an evolving sequential orchestration, I produced a draft of this sketch and, in 1971, recorded a first version of the work with musician friends to see how it worked, before the Queen Elizabeth Hall concert in 1972. One of the people in charge of the Europalia festival, who often worked with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Ballet and the Royal Opera, had asked one of his assistants to go to London to scout out new stage creations for their new edition, dedicated to British culture in all its forms: poetry, music, film, theater and visual arts. He had greatly appreciated *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* and *The Sinking of the Titanic*. It was through him that we were invited to perform these two pieces in concert at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. This was in 1973, just as the UK was joining the EEC in effect the European Economic Community. It was the second time I played in Europe, after a concert we had given in Rome in 1969 with John Tilbury. At that time, Belgium was doing a lot for new and experimental music. It enabled me to propose other projects outside the UK on a regular basis. The hardest part was always finding the musicians to put together and produce *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*. I often had to make do with what I had on hand. On one occasion, I had a group of saxophones; on another, trombones. It depended on the situation, and the orchestral balance evolved accordingly. The piece was recorded in 1975 on Brian Eno's Obscure Records label. I had assembled, as best I could, a full orchestra capable of playing all the sections. I was able to count on some of my friends, but also had to recruit other professional musicians from the BBC Orchestra, notably for the horn part. At the end of the recording session, everyone handed in their invoices and insisted on not having their names on the disc. They didn't want to be identified in order to not damage their reputations. So we did this. The result was a very strange recording, in which, apart from me and my friends, none of the musicians were mentioned.

The record was promoted as well as it possibly could have been and it was met with some success. This was thanks to Obscure Records, whose history and reputation would help considerably. I went on to create other versions of *Jesus' Blood*, including, almost twenty years later, the one released by Point Music, where the orchestration is far more complex and extensive, and includes a very large number of instruments...

Sixty-five...

Is that so? At least [laughs]. This time, unlike the first recording, all the musicians, the best of the New York Philharmonic, wanted to be quoted and were careful to have their names spelled correctly, starting with the first violin. All were totally committed to the cause. But the situation was completely different.

***Jesus' Blood Never failed Me Yet* was reissued in 1993 by Point Music, Philip Glass' former label. How did this project come about?**

Philip was familiar with my work and wanted me to send him live recordings of some of my pieces to see if there might be something to release on CD. He soon opted for *Jesus' Blood*. However, as he was referring to the original LP, Philip thought that the work was only twenty-five minutes long, whereas this was mainly due to the format imposed by the two sides of the disc. In order to fit the CD's timing, he felt that one or two more pieces had to be added. But for me, that wasn't possible. *Jesus' Blood* couldn't appear as just another track on the same album. So, I suggested that the first twenty-five minutes of the new recording should follow exactly the same structure as the original, and that they should be extended by another fifty minutes or so, with new orchestral movements, until they reached the required length for a CD, i.e. seventy-five to seventy-six minutes. I had already written several pieces for orchestra and felt more experienced in this type of writing. I also had the idea that the concluding part should be Tom Waits accompanying the old man's initial song, in a kind of unheard-of duet from a distance. Philip was very surprised by the whole project, which made him quite nervous at first. He wasn't sure what to decide. He feared that the piece would become too monotonous and repetitive, but in the end he trusted me and agreed. So, it was he who asked me to record an album on his label, and *Jesus' Blood* was his choice. Except that what he had in mind wasn't exactly what I suggested.

How do you explain the public's attachment to this work more than forty years after its creation?

In my opinion, there are two main reasons for this.

Firstly, the Point Music recording enabled the piece to be distributed more widely than Obscure Records had been able to do so at the time. This is because Philip [Glass]'s label had considerable resources at its disposal, particularly in the advertising field since Point Music was a subsidiary of Philips Classics. What's more, it was his new label, and my record was the first in the catalog. *Jesus' Blood* also has a social resonance. Except that between the 1975 and 1993 versions, the political and economic situation in Europe in general, and in England in particular, had changed, especially with regards to the homeless. The work took on new resonance in 1993. In 1975, the old man we heard singing was, unfortunately, one of the many old men begging on the streets. Nearly twenty years later, such a situation could also concern young, middle-class people, single or in couples, who found themselves on the streets after losing their jobs or experiencing multiple difficulties. In other words, the homeless were no longer a class apart. Anyone could be affected. It had become a systemic problem, to which the public had become much more sensitive.

Many articles were published in 1993 on this subject, and they weren't always favorable to my play. One newspaper even mounted a campaign against me, claiming that I was exploiting the homeless. However hard we tried to persuade them otherwise, and explained that the old man in *Jesus' Blood* was probably no longer alive, the authors of the article would have none of it. So that he could supposedly get his due, they even pretended to find the old man or, failing that, his family, without actually knowing if he still had any. And even if they did, how could they be sure it was really his family?

We then started to image the various scenarios where the old man's hypothetical son or daughter came forward to file a complaint. Little by little, the journalists in question came to understand that their stubbornness was stupid and literally reversed their point of view.

All the more so as Tom and I had released a special Christmas recording of *Jesus' Blood* the same year and raised nearly ten thousand pounds, all of which was donated to London's homeless charities and Homeless Shelter. The whole false controversy then fell by the wayside.

On the whole, Point Music's version of *Jesus' Blood* was a hit when it was released in 1993, so much so that the record was even nominated for the Mercury Prize, which had been created only a year earlier and was already the focus of the music industry's attention. Ten albums, mainly from the pop music world, were

nominated that year. There was also one in classical music and another in jazz. In the end, *Jesus' Blood* didn't win, but it was a big hit with the public. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to make it to the awards ceremony because, coincidentally, we were performing *Jesus' Blood* in Lyon on the same evening.

The piece even ended up in the charts, notably on Classic FM. Every Saturday morning, the radio station presented its ranking of the week's top twenty albums, and *Jesus' Blood* ended up in first place, which was very much noticed and earned it the right to be played regularly. It's very rare for jazz, classical or contemporary records to receive such attention.

The same was true in Canada. For an entire period, the record topped all the charts, well ahead of the likes of Van Halen! Critic Robert Everett-Green broadcast a long excerpt on the national radio station, CBC-Radio 2. But some listeners called in or wrote to complain to management, since they had authorized the broadcast of such a work, which kept repeating itself over and over again. Everett-Green had to publicly apologize the next time. On the other hand, he was supported by other listeners who, fortunately, had enjoyed the piece. Unintentionally, of course, *Jesus' Blood* provoked a small national debate.

The Canadian example is not an isolated one. This work has never left anyone indifferent, and has always triggered highly contrasting reactions.

You premiered *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* in December 1972 at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Since then, the piece has often been performed or recorded, by you or others, in different forms from its original version...

Absolutely. I remember, for example, that in 1994 we performed a symphonic version of the work for the first time with the huge Winnipeg Orchestra. This was also the case with the Adelaide and Copenhagen orchestras, and many other places, or with smaller formations, such as this year, with only six musicians, for a concert lasting thirty minutes less.

And then there were the numerous projects to adapt *Jesus' Blood* for the stage, starting with Maguy Marin's *May B* in 1981 and William Forsythe's *Quintett* in 1993, when he directed the Frankfurt Ballet. In order to use it exclusively, the Ballet's directors were prepared to pay a quarter of the total production cost of Point Music's new recording, i.e. the equivalent of around 60,000 euros – a considerable sum! At the same time, Forsythe had been working on *Quintett* from the Obscure Records version, for which there was obviously much less to pay. When the administrators found out, they literally panicked. That's why I decided to publish an encore

version specially for Forsythe's piece, comprising only the first part of *Jesus' Blood* from the new recording, based on the structure of the old one. The ballet lasted around twenty-five minutes, perfectly fitting the format of the original LP. Quintett was a great success, and the ballet is often performed again.

But Maguy Marin and William Forsythe aren't the only ones to have used or covered *Jesus' Blood*, far from it. Other companies, artists, singers and groups have also done so.

Jesus' Blood achieved such recognition that even the producers of the ER series wanted to use it in a scene in one episode where one of the protagonists, who is in hospital, regains consciousness when he hears my music. As I knew nothing about the series at the time, I didn't give my authorization, despite the colossal sum I was promised. In any case, it showed once again how popular *Jesus' Blood* had become.

Surprisingly, this reissue was far more successful than that of *The Sinking of the Titanic*, also released by Point Music two years later, despite the fact that they both followed the same production methods.

ABOUT THE BOOK

BACK COVER

With the 1972 premiere of *The Sinking of the Titanic* and *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*, whose 1993 revival in association with Tom Waits earned him international renown, Gavin Bryars soon established himself on the contemporary music scene, producing a string of powerful works and prestigious collaborations with Robert Wilson, Merce Cunningham, Carolyn Carlson and Lucinda Childs, among others. Between December 2017 and July 2020, Jean-Louis Tallon spoke at length with the British composer. The book *Gavin Bryars, en paroles, en musique* (Gavin Bryars in words, in music) - the first book devoted to the musician - reproduces these exchanges in their entirety, offering a panoramic view of a major itinerary spanning fifty years of creative work.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Born in Lyon in 1973, Jean-Louis Tallon is the author of *Composition de l'atmosphère* (Le Grand Souffle, 2007). For over twenty years, he has conducted numerous interviews with writers and artists, some of which have been published, such as *Un écho lacunaire* with Pierre Bergounioux (Fata Morgana, 2014), or *Philippe Hersant, portrait d'un compositeur* (Cécile Default, 2015).

THE SINKING OF THE TITANIC

by Gavin Bryars

Music

Gavin Bryars

Illustration

Cristina Iglesias

Artist book concept and design
Luigi Castiglioni

MAKING OFF OF THE BOOK DESIGN

by **Luigi Castiglioni**

The Sinking of the Titanic is a story told by Gavin Bryars through various sound alphabets. Some of these sounds are the notes of the original score, those of the orchestra and also those of the rumble of the engines, the cries...

In this artist's book, I wanted to tell this story with the means that I felt are most akin to my creativity: typographic materials, colours and textures. With Gavin Bryars, I wanted to collect each fragment of original sound to make them a piece of a new creation: the memories of the survivors, the three strikes of the ship's bell, the music that accompanied the collision and the sinking.

Along with the black and silver of the scores, I wanted to insert a series of graphic and coloristic interventions that created the experience of the collision of steel against ice, of night on the ocean and of souls and bodies slowly sinking.

A desperate SOS closes the score. It is an echo capable of sounding alive and heartbreaking till today.

The collaboration with artist Cristina Iglesias, very much attentive to the interaction between mankind and nature, has allowed me to emphasize the visual suggestion with prints of great emotional power. This stands as an ideal crowning to this bold editorial experiment of mine.

Printed letterpress on Fabriano Tiepolo 250 gsm
by Tipoteca Italiana, Cornuda (Treviso)
on an original Nebiolo Atena cylinder press of 1963.
The etchings were processed on polymer plates and printed
by Benveniste Contemporary in Madrid.

The limited edition consists of one hundred and thirty copies
signed by Gavin Bryars and Cristina Iglesias.
Copies in Arabic numerals from 1/100 to 30/100
are composed by three etchings, one suite of etchings
and an engraved metal plate used for printing.
Copies in Roman numerals from I/XXX to XXX/XXX
are for collaborators and artists.

Each copy includes:

Gavin Bryars' autograph musical notation representing
the sound of the Titanic's bell (E flat);
a 10 inch vinyl record with on side A the original sounds used
by Gavin Bryars to compose the pre-recorded material
for performing the piece and on side B the testimony
of Miss Edith Russell and Miss Eva Hart,
two survivors of the tragedy, interviewed by Gavin Bryars in 1972.

Printed in Italy – February, 2023

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COMPOSER'S NOTE

This piece originated in a sketch written for an exhibition in support
of beleaguered art students at Portsmouth in 1969. Working as
I was in an art college environment I was interested to see what
might be the musical equivalent of a work of conceptual art.
It was not until 1972 that I made a performing version of the
piece for part of an evening of my work at the Queen Elizabeth
Hall, London and during the next three years I performed the

piece several times. In 1975 I made a recorded version for the first of the ten records produced for Brian Eno's Obscure label.

In 1990 I re-recorded the piece "live" at the Printemps de Bourges festival when the availability of an extraordinary space and the rediscovery of the wreck made me think again about the music. This version also formed the basis for the 1994 recording on Point. All the materials used in the piece are derived from research and speculations about the sinking of the "unsinkable" luxury liner. On April 14th 1912 the Titanic struck an iceberg at 11.40 PM in the North Atlantic and sank at 2.20 AM on April 15th. Of the 2201 people on board only 711 were to reach New York.

The initial starting point for the piece was the reported fact of the band having played a hymn in the final minutes of the ship's sinking in an extraordinary act of self-sacrifice. The ship's junior wireless operator Harold Bride identified this hymn:

"... from aft came the tunes of the band... The ship was gradually turning on her nose - just like a duck that goes down for a dive... The band was still playing.

I guess all of the band went down. They were playing "Autumn" then. I swam with all my might. I suppose I was 150 feet away when the Titanic, on her nose, with her afterquarter sticking straight up in the air, began to settle slowly....The way the band kept playing was a noble thing... the last I saw of the band, when I was floating out in the sea with my lifebelt on, it was still on deck playing "Autumn". How they ever did it I cannot imagine."

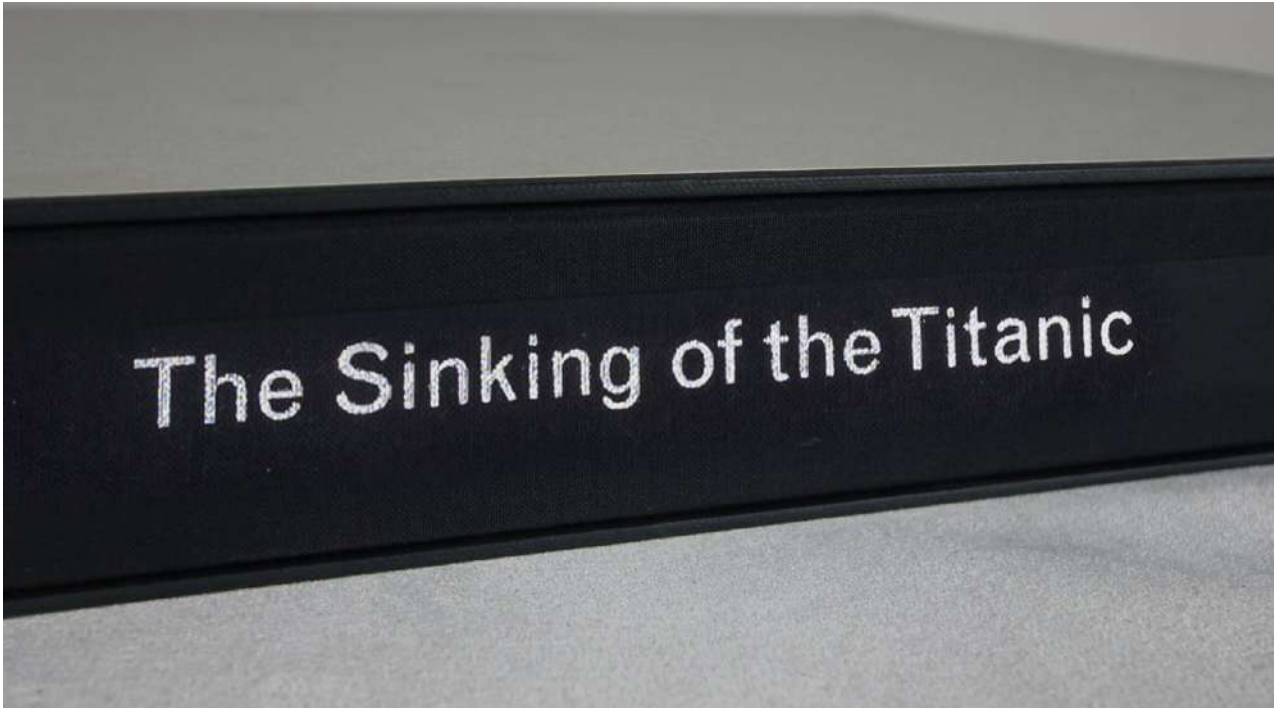
This Episcopal hymn becomes the principle element of the music and is subject to a variety of treatments and it forms a base over which other material is superimposed.

Although I conceived the piece many years ago I continue to enjoy finding new ways of looking at the material in it and welcome opportunities to look at it afresh. Some of this material might seem puzzling but it is all rooted in fact.

The sound of a football crowd ("like 100,000 people at the cup final") and the sound of crickets in a field in Pennsylvania are two of the similes used to describe the sound of people in the water (and the recordings I use are precisely those: of a cup final crowd, and of crickets recorded in the fields of Pennsylvania).

The music box plays the tune La Maxixe just as did the one in the toy pig that Edith Russell used to amuse and distract children in the lifeboat. The speaking voices are those of survivors Edith Russell and Eva Hart, who I interviewed in 1972 just before the first live performance of the piece.

Gavin Bryars 2007













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Gravin Bryars, April 2007



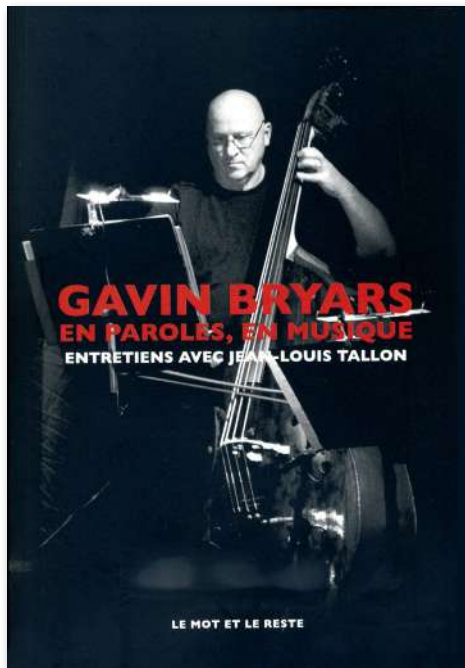




The story of « **The Sinking of the Titanic** »
by **Gavin Bryars**

Excerpt from
GAVIN BRYARS EN PAROLES EN MUSIQUE
ENTRETIENS AVEC JEAN-LOUIS TALLON

Éditions Le mot et le reste, 2020 [pages 50-56]



Also in 1969, you began work on a fourth, still experimental piece: *The Sinking of the Titanic*. How did you become interested – musically – in the sinking of the Titanic?

I'm not sure I remember exactly. At the time, I was a part-time lecturer at the University of Portsmouth. I had suggested to some of my colleagues, with whom I had a good relationship, that they collaborate on an exhibition in support of Fine Art students, who were meeting with opposition from certain professors because of the nature of their work: it wasn't painting or sculpture, but events, performances, conceptual pieces and so on. The exhibition thus focused on their work and that of the teaching staff who supported them. For my part, my contribution consisted of an A4 page on which I had written a text about the sinking of the Titanic. The page, intended to be displayed as a work of art, talked about the

liner's orchestra, which had reportedly continued to play during the sinking, the sound effects its gradual submergence might have generated, and speculated on how to reproduce them. It was by no means a score. I was interested in conceptual art, and in particular in works consisting solely of text. Initially, *The Sinking of the Titanic* was to be just that. The reader was free, after reading the exposed document, to imagine the work, so to speak, as he or she saw fit. It was Victor Schonfield, then director of Music Now, who, having heard about the exhibition and my famous page, asked me three years later, as he wanted to organize a concert around my music, to create the potential music piece. I was caught at my own game. I then had to take all the elements I'd collected since 1969 around *The Sinking of the Titanic* and set about writing the whole thing in earnest.

You've been investigating this subject for several years...

Yes. Between 1969 and 1972, I read numerous reports, books, testimonies and interviews with survivors. I got hold of the ship's plans. I had a very detailed overview of the Titanic and could easily find my way around. I acted like a detective. I was conducting an investigation, looking for clues, each time adding to a growing body of information. The question was how to put it all together and use it to create a cohesive piece. It was a real challenge for me. So, I decided to focus on a few elements and let them resonate throughout. From the outset, what became *The Sinking of the Titanic* took on a form that was intended to be mobile and modular, as new elements and ideas entered the composition and I integrated them into the structure. That said, this form, however it was represented, ended up inducing a type of performance that, over time, became fixed.

Subsequently, I continued to gather new information about the Titanic, especially after the discovery of the wreck. I even had the opportunity to meet members of the scientific expeditions exploring the wreck, which prompted me to create a new version of the work between 1989 and 1990.

What musical ideas did you want to bring to bear on *The Sinking of the Titanic*?

The Sinking of the Titanic is a musical composition, in the almost etymological sense of the word, since I've put together different

elements, different ideas. I didn't write any notes or melodies, and the ones you hear in the piece come from existing pieces – the very ones that would have been played by the orchestra at the time of the sinking, like *Autumn* or *Aughton* – which I combined in different ways..

It's a collage...

Yes. Or an assemblage. It was less about melody than acoustics. I was trying to imagine the effects of reverberation and distortion that the sound of the instruments used by the orchestra at the time of the shipwreck would have produced if they had continued to play, even after being swallowed up in the waves with the boat. In fact, I've been working on this issue with the Physics Department at Cardiff University.

Why were you so fascinated by the sinking of the Titanic??

It was an event I found deeply mysterious and unsettling. The Titanic, as everyone knows, was supposed to be unsinkable. Such a ship could not sink. And the first time she sets sail, she does! This powerful construction, so fascinating to the imagination, a symbol of cutting-edge human technology, sank, disappearing body and soul, and with it, as has often been said, the scientific optimism of the 19th century: the idea that science rhymes with progress. In 1912, the sinking of the Titanic heralded the West's entry into a chaotic 20th century, which would become a reality two years later with the outbreak of the First World War.

Paradoxically, the Titanic disaster, in the eyes of the survivors, brought to light the harsh reality of the social order of the time: the women and children of the first and second classes were saved, unlike those of the third class, where only thirty percent were saved. On the other hand, a large number of first-class men died because they preferred to remain on deck, risking their lives in a sort of old Victorian dignity reflex. The Titanic disaster thus paints a complex picture, combining social, political, scientific, technological, philosophical and ideological considerations.

**Did you see James Cameron's feature film when it was released?
And, if so, what did you think of it?**

Yes, I saw it. The BBC invited me to the film's UK premiere, as did, among others, the novelist Beryl Bainbridge, who wrote a novel about the Titanic disaster entitled *Every Man for Himself*. Titanic is a technically accomplished film, but in my view it's nothing more than entertainment. There's nothing artistic about it. There are also a few inconsistencies and errors. I'm thinking, for example, of the ship's chimneys. We now know that one of them was a fake, there purely for aesthetic purposes, but on screen, all four smoke and function. There were also all those stupid things about Kate Winslet's character. Point Music had contacted James Cameron, in case he wanted to use the recording version of *The Sinking of the Titanic*. Cameron knew my piece. In the end, however, he relied solely on composer James Horner, who wrote his own music and no others were used for the film. Horner's music works very well throughout the film, with the exception of the sequence in which the passengers, after the Titanic's demise, wait in the water for rescue. For that particular moment, my piece would probably have been better suited than the film's.

What was the public reaction to the premiere of your work in 1972? Do you remember it?

Yes, it was dreadful. I'd written *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* a year before, and Victor Schonfield had wanted to programme both pieces on an evening devoted to my music, which was quite unexpected for me. I was only twenty-nine! At the time, how many composers could boast of being honored in this way at that age? Today, it seems to me that it's a little more frequent: I'm thinking, for example, of Thomas Adès, who often had proposals in this direction at the same age - but he's much younger than me. The Music Now Ensemble performed the premieres of *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* and *The Sinking of the Titanic*. The Portsmouth Sinfonia was also invited to the same concert to play classical music standards. I, for one, have extraordinary memories of this moment. But as far as the audience was concerned, the condemnation was unanimous, almost without appeal. Almost without exception, everyone was highly critical and even negative about the piece and its interpretation. I was deeply affected. These were the first works I'd really cared about. Of course, I would have liked the public to say something good about it. It takes a great deal of experience and detachment to learn to accept criticism, even unpleasant criticism, without being hurt by it. My mother, on the other hand, always kept

all press clippings and newspaper articles about me, even when their content was not to my advantage. She was so happy I was in the paper [laughs]! Even if it was a bad review, it didn't matter to her. She was proud to read my name. I've always been very touched by that.

You composed *The Sinking of the Titanic* when you were twenty-nine. Today, forty years after its creation, this piece is one of the most emblematic of your work. How do you explain this? Is it linked to the Titanic, to your "composition", to both?

This is undoubtedly due to the story of the Titanic. My score is plural and complex: it's not dramatic, but rather meditative, and works in strata or moments. Numerous sounds intertwine and tangle, and their ever-changing resonance plunges us into a somewhat sombre atmosphere. For some, it's a real immersion. Others reject it. But most, when they make the effort to enter, are truly absorbed. There are many for whom listening to such a work was important. They keep going back and discovering new things each time, which can only satisfy me. It's a piece that still means a lot to me, and one that I continue to play.

As in 2012, in particular...

For the centenary of the shipwreck, yes, of course. After recording the work in 1975 on Obscure Records, I honestly thought I'd never get the chance to do it again. And yet, until recently, I never stopped.

ABOUT THE BOOK

BACK COVER

With the 1972 premiere of *The Sinking of the Titanic* and *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*, whose 1993 revival in association with Tom Waits earned him international renown, Gavin Bryars soon established himself on the contemporary music scene, producing a string of powerful works and prestigious collaborations with Robert Wilson, Merce Cunningham, Carolyn Carlson and Lucinda Childs, among others. Between December 2017 and July 2020, Jean-Louis Tallon spoke at length with the British composer. The book *Gavin Bryars, en paroles, en musique* (Gavin Bryars in words, in music) - the first book devoted to the musician - reproduces these exchanges in their entirety, offering a panoramic view of a major itinerary spanning fifty years of creative work.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Born in Lyon in 1973, Jean-Louis Tallon is the author of *Composition de l'atmosphère* (Le Grand Souffle, 2007). For over twenty years, he has conducted numerous interviews with writers and artists, some of which have been published, such as *Un écho lacunaire* with Pierre Bergounioux (Fata Morgana, 2014), or *Philippe Hersant, portrait d'un compositeur* (Cécile Default, 2015).



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