

Complete Works **WIM VILJOEN**



Isabelle van Rensburg - Organ

Zanta Hofmeyr - Violin

Chanticleer Singers

Homage to Wim Viljoen

This recording of the complete works of Wim Viljoen is a deeply personal project for me. For fourteen years I had the privilege of studying with him, and today I serve as his successor as organist at NG Universiteitsoord in Pretoria, the Dutch Reformed Church where he was organist from 1992 to 2022. During this time, I came to know not only his artistry as a composer and performer, but also his professionalism, friendliness, and gentle nature.

Wim Viljoen composed a small, but significant body of work: five compositions for solo organ, four of which are based on church chorales; two descants; and one choral work, a setting of Psalm 8 for mixed choir. In addition, he wrote a number of introductions to chorales, which are not included on this recording. Alongside his compositions, he recorded several CDs, both as solo artist and with other musicians and choirs. His enduring legacy in South Africa is defined, above all, by his performances as a concert organist and his contribution as a revered organ teacher at the University of Pretoria. His influence is perpetuated through the students he mentored, the audiences he inspired, and the musical life he shaped in churches (specifically at NG Universiteitsoord), in concert halls, and in communities across the country.

It has been a privilege to collaborate with Zanta Hofmeyr, who regularly performed and recorded with Wim, and with the Chanticleer Singers, who embody the spirit of excellence and dedication that he so valued. Together, we offer this album as a celebration of his life and work, and as a gift to future generations.

The remarkable organ of the Dutch Reformed Church Universiteitsoord (NG Universiteitsoord) was pivotal to this project, having been at the heart of so much of Wim's and my own music-making. Its unique and versatile worlds of sound have shaped our shared heritage and continues to inspire new generations of musicians.

I hereby express my sincere gratitude to Wim Viljoen for the time he invested in me and countless other students. His teaching and the example of his own artistry have significantly contributed towards shaping the organ culture in South Africa.

— Isabelle van Rensburg

Composer's Biography

Wim Viljoen (b. 1950)

As a performing artist, church organist and educator, Wim Viljoen is one of South Africa's most respected and most influential musicians.

Born on 12 October 1950 as the youngest of seven siblings, Willem Diederik ('Wim') Viljoen grew up and began his music education in Rustenburg. He began his organ studies at the age of 13, and as a high school pupil, travelled by train to Pretoria on Saturdays for advanced organ lessons. He pursued his undergraduate studies at the University of Pretoria with Prof. Stephanus Zondagh, obtaining the University Teacher's Licentiate in Organ (UTLM, 1972), Diploma in Church Music (1973) and the degree BMus (1973), all with distinction. He subsequently studied organ with Marie-Claire Alain in Paris (France) for two years, and attended harpsichord master classes with Huguette Dreyfus. During his overseas studies he won the 'Prix Mention d'Interpretation' in the 4th Chartres International Organ Competition, and a competition in Nürnberg. He became the first South African to participate in the International Festival of Young Organists in Switzerland. The degrees MMus (1980) and DPhil (1986) in Organ Performance and Musicology were conferred on him by the University of Cape Town and the University of Pretoria respectively. His doctoral thesis investigated the ornamentation symbols in the 16th-century *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*. He was appointed at the University of Pretoria in 1977, and retired as Professor and Head of the Music Department at the end of 2015.

Throughout his career, Viljoen maintained a full schedule of performances as a concert organist, both locally and internationally. He performed across South Africa and Namibia in concert venues and churches, at all of the arts festivals, and in radio broadcasts: in solo organ recitals, with all of the major South African orchestras, and with accomplished fellow musicians including Kammersängerin Mimi Coertse, violinist Zanta Hofmeyr and trumpeter Anton Delen. He premièred many works, including compositions by various South African composers that were written for and dedicated to him.

Internationally, Viljoen performed in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Germany, and the Czech Republic. Highlights of his international performances include a concert in Westminster Abbey (London, UK) and Huddersfield Town Hall (UK), and recitals at the international music festivals of Dax (France) and Oundle (UK). His 2007 recital tour of the US included concerts at the University of North Texas and the University of Wichita. In 2011 he was one of seven international organists who performed the complete organ works of Jehan Alain at Wichita State University (US).

He inaugurated a number of prestigious organs in various South African venues. In 2011 he gave the first recital on the historic Conacher organ (1897), which was transferred from Birmingham to the restored Potchefstroom Dutch Reformed Church. Internationally, he inaugurated the rebuilt 18th-century organ of St Stephen's Cathedral in Litomerice, Czech Republic.

In addition to many recordings for South African radio, Viljoen has appeared in five television programmes (for Kyknet, SABC TV2 and SABC TV3). He recorded fourteen compact discs since 1998: *A celebration of the Rieger organ of the University of South Africa* (world première recording of the Dutch composer Jacques van Oortmerssen's 'Five chorale preludes', released by Priory Records in the UK), *Recital* (on two important SA organs), *Universiteitsoord* (on the organ of NG Universiteitsoord) *Arioso* and *Cantilena* with Zanta Hofmeyr (organ and violin), *The Trumpet Shall Sound* with Anton Delen (trumpet and organ), *O Divine Redeemer* (live recording of a Christmas concert), *Sing tot eer van die Here* (congregational singing at NG Universiteitsoord), four live CD recordings of the SABC programme 'Loof die Here' (on the organs of the Pretoria City Hall, the ZK Matthews Hall, and the Aula, and *Heavenly Organ 1 & 2* (with three other organists).

Viljoen made a significant contribution to the field of liturgical organ music and performance through numerous lectures and workshops for organists and students of music and theology, as well as the various introductions to chorales that he composed. A member of the Southern African Church and Concerts Organists' Society (SAKOV) since its inception, Viljoen served as its chairperson from 2001 to 2005, and was awarded honorary membership in 2010. He never hesitated to travel to both cities and small, rural towns for the sake of performing, and lecturing on, liturgical organ music. As organist of NG Universiteitsoord for thirty years, he 'converted' scores of churchgoers and students to the beauty and joy of organ music.

As an educator, academic, examiner of practical exams, and adjudicator for international music competitions, Viljoen's legacy lies in his academic work and publications, but even more so in his supervision, practical tuition (locally and internationally) and mentoring of scores of musicians, including a select cohort of students who achieved international acclaim as organists. Several of his students have won bursaries in South Africa, including the UNISA Stephanus Zondagh Organ Scholarship, which have enabled them to pursue their studies in the USA, the Netherlands and France. One of these former students, Herman Jordaan, won the first prize in the prestigious St Albans International Organ Competition in 2003.

Beyond his compositions, Viljoen left a lasting mark as a teacher and mentor to generations of musicians, fostering excellence in performance and creativity. He is a worthy recipient of accolades like the Hubert Rupert Prize for Classical Music (Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, 2013). This recording presents, for the first time, his complete works — a testament to a life dedicated to the organ.

Notes on the Compositions

This recording brings together all of Wim Viljoen's completed compositions.

1. Fanfare on 'Lasst uns erfreuen' – [2:09]

Composed in June 1998, this work is based on the well-known 17th-century German hymn tune 'Lasst uns erfreuen'. First published in 1623 with an Easter text, the melody later gained worldwide recognition through the *English Hymnal* of 1906, where it was set to St Francis of Assisi's text, 'All creatures of our God and King'. Viljoen's setting, originally titled 'Fanfare op Gesang 8' and published in *Met hart en mond en hande!* (1998), features inventive use of structure, harmony, and imitation. The work opens with brilliant fanfare-like chords before the chorale melody emerges, echoed between manuals and pedal. It culminates in a jubilant ending with augmented rhythms, flowing triplets, and resonant open fifths, reinforcing the triumph of the opening phrase.

2. Hyfrydol – [2:54]

Though the exact date of composition is unknown, this setting was published in 2010. The hymn tune 'HYFRYDOL' was written in 1830 by Rowland H. Prichard (1811–1887), and has since become one of the most beloved melodies in Christian hymnody. Viljoen's arrangement, originally titled 'Laat ons sing van ons Verlosser' (Lied 219 in the *Liedboek van die Kerk*, 2001), appeared in *Feesbundel* (vol. 1), published by SAKOV (2010). The piece opens with a dominant pedal point and the first two notes of the melody, which later define the rhythmic character of the accompaniment. The chorale line is passed between right and left hand, with carefully indicated registrations — a solo stop on the Swell; flute stops for accompaniment; and, later, the addition of a Prestant — giving the music both colour and progression. In this recording, the chosen registrations reflect the words of the Afrikaans hymn as it is found in the third verse of 'Met ons harte sing ons, Here' (Lied 220 in the *Liedboek van die Kerk*) with lyrics, "In 'n koor met duisend stemme sal ons loflied U besing", emphasising joyful proclamation.

3. Descant on 'Holy, holy, holy' – [2:11]

The descant on 'Holy, holy, holy' is based on the well-loved hymn 'Heilig, heilig, heilig'. Since the score could not be located, this version was transcribed by ear. Though unpublished, it appears as a trumpet descant on the CD *Sing tot eer van die Here*, recorded and released by NG Universiteitsoord in 1996 (track 11). This is one of only two known descants by Viljoen. Each phrase of the descant begins in unison with the hymn melody before branching into an independent line. The rhythm closely mirrors that of the cantus firmus, with the exception of the second phrase, where crotchets lead seamlessly into the third phrase. For this recording, the hymn tune was played first, followed by the descant.

4. Psalm 8 – [3:47]

Composed in 1976, 'Psalm 8' is Viljoen's only choral work. It sets five verses of Totius' (J.D. du Toit, 1877–1953) Afrikaans versification of Psalm 8 to original music. Written in strophic form, each verse is sung to the same melody, evoking the character of a Gregorian chant. Viljoen marks the performance as rhythmically free and declamatory, underscoring the timeless, meditative quality of the text and music. The score remains unpublished.

5. Descant on 'Herzlich tut mich verlangen' – [3:08]

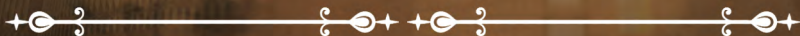
This well-known hymn tune is also associated with 'O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden'. Its original title references its use with Psalm 143 / Lied 387, 388, 389 in *Liedboek van die Kerk* (2001). Published by SAKOV in *Nuwe inleidings, harmonisasies, verwerkings, naspele en verwerkings van die kerklied* (vol. 1, 2002), the descant was paired with the text 'O Jesus, man van smarte, o Liefde onbegrens'. The line does not strictly follow the rhythm of the cantus firmus, instead using shorter note values and passing tones to bring variety and movement. This is one of only two descants composed by Viljoen, both of which highlight his sensitivity to chorale melody and text. For this recording, the hymn tune was played first, followed by the descant.

6. Miniatuur vir orrel: Binne 'n droom – [2:41]

This unpublished work, 'Miniatuur vir orrel: Binne 'n droom', is unique in Viljoen's output as his only non-liturgical organ composition. Likely written during his tenure as organist at NG Universiteitsoord, the piece specifies a solo line on an 8' Prestant—a stop he was particularly fond of. It unfolds as a meditative miniature, built on a repeating bass line in a slow, syncopated rhythm centred on the pitch of A. Characteristic use of minor seventh chords in the accompaniment supports a simple, yet expressive melody, shaped around a recurring fifth interval that creates gentle dissonance with the pedal. The work closes with a gradually expanding tone cluster, fading into a dreamlike conclusion.

7. Hyfrydol – [3:21]

This is a second recording of the same piece as No. 2 on the album. It explores a more contemplative and serene character, following the guidance of Wim Viljoen's indication "rustig" (serene). The registration choices evoke a gentle, flowing sound that reflects the hymn's devotional nature and the reflective joy of singing of our Saviour. The subtle tonal colours are intended to convey contentment.



8. Postlude on 'Adeste fideles' – [3:03]

This work was written in 1978. It was originally titled 'Kom alle getroues, vrolik en vol vreugde: Koraalnaspel op Gesang 88'. It is based on the beloved Christmas hymn 'O come, all ye faithful' (*Adeste fideles*). Published in *Liturgiese orrelmusiek* vol. 3 (1979), the piece opens with a rhythmic reworking of the hymn's first phrase, creating flowing motion above a melody line stated in long note values. That opening figure then evolves into an energetic ostinato, which becomes the accompaniment beneath the chorale melody. Viljoen's characteristic use of harmonies built on the lowered seventh degree recurs throughout; and owing to its clear registration indications and festive character the work shines as a jubilant organ postlude.

9. Fanfare on 'Llanfair' – [2:37]

This work, published in 2010 in SAKOV's *Feesbundel* vol. 1, is based on the hymn tune 'LLANFAIR' by the Welsh composer Robert Williams (1781–1821). The original title of Viljoen's work, 'Kyk die Heer het opgestaan – Fanfare', reflects the text traditionally associated with this Easter melody. The composition opens with a brilliant fanfare before the chorale enters in imitation across the voices, the melody alternating between soprano and tenor lines. At the second statement of the hymn tune, powerful pedal notes and four-part chords appear on the weak beats, heightening the rhythmic energy. Viljoen left ideas on registration for this piece. With its tutti registration (*fff*), plenum, and the addition of reeds in the second section, the piece captures the full splendour of a festive organ fanfare.

Performers' Biographies

Isabelle van Rensburg – Organ

Isabelle van Rensburg is a concert organist and pedagogue, lauded for her expressive playing and imaginative programming. She holds a DMus in Performing Arts from the University of Pretoria, completed under the guidance of Prof. Wim Viljoen and Prof. Theo van Wyk.

Her musical prowess has been recognized through numerous accolades, including first prizes in national competitions such as the ATKV Muziq Competition and the UNISA Music Scholarship Competition. Throughout her academic pursuits, Isabelle has been the recipient of several prestigious scholarships, including the Stephanus Zondagh Organ Scholarship from UNISA, and the Doctoral Bursary from the Southern African Church and Concert Organists Society (SAKOV).

Her international career as a concert organist has taken her to Namibia, Italy, and the US cities of Boston, Mass. and Portland, ME. Alongside her concert performances, Isabelle holds the position of organist at NG Universiteitsoord, and teaches organ and music theory at her own academy of music. She is passionate about South African liturgical repertoire and preserving the country's organ heritage.

Zanta Hofmeyr – Violin

Violinist Zanta Hofmeyr is one of South Africa's most distinguished performers. A graduate of the Juilliard School of Music in New York, NY, she has appeared as a soloist with major orchestras, and collaborates widely with chamber ensembles and choirs. Her artistry is marked by warmth, precision, and deep musicality.

Zanta shared a long-standing musical partnership with composer and concert organist Wim Viljoen. The two regularly performed together and recorded several CDs, leaving behind a rich legacy of collaboration that continues to inspire. Her participation in this project celebrates both a personal and professional bond with Viljoen's music.

Chanticleer Singers

Founded in 1980 by conductor Richard Cock, the Chanticleer Singers is South Africa's premier chamber choir. Known for their versatility and expressive interpretations, the ensemble has performed extensively across the country and abroad, often introducing audiences to new and significant works.

The choir has championed South African composers throughout its history, premiering and recording many works that form part of the country's cultural heritage. In this project, the Chanticleer Singers bring their unique sound and artistry to Wim Viljoen's music, ensuring that his legacy is preserved for future generations.

Members on this recording:

Conductor: Esté Meerkotter

Soprano: Bronwen Anderson, Christine Geldenhuys, Irma Meyer, Louise Frahm-Arp, Louise Hurn, Surette Prinsloo

Alto: Cora Hoexter, Diana Cowen, Ingrid Von Seydlitz, Julia Read, Karien Gudde, Susan Harrop-Allin

Tenor: Chris Mostert, Mark Marais, Riaal Domingues, Willem Brooks

Bass: Bodo Meyer, Hendre Van Zyl, Jaco Pretorius, Waldo Egan, Wion Flett



The Organ of NG Universiteitsoord, Pretoria

The organ of NG Universiteitsoord holds a special place in South Africa's musical landscape. Built by the prominent but now defunct firm South African Organ Builders (SAOB), it was inaugurated in 1967 and has since been indispensable to both the congregation's religious activities and the concert organ scene in Pretoria. Over the years, many renowned national and international concert organists have performed on this instrument, cementing its reputation as one of the country's most important organs. The instrument combines a rich palette of colours in the Neo-Baroque style with clarity and balance. It is equally suited to liturgical repertoire, pre-Baroque, Baroque, French Romantic, and contemporary works. Its unique acoustical setting and its voicing, done by the late Jan Pekelharing, give it a distinctive voice that has inspired generations of musicians.

To Wim Viljoen, the organist for thirty years (1992 to 2022), this instrument was both a musical partner and a vehicle for artistic expression. Today, it continues to play a vital role under the stewardship of Isabelle van Rensburg, linking past and present in the ongoing story of South African organ music.





Disposition of the organ:

HOOFWERK

- Kwintadeen 16' • Prestant 8' • Roerfluit 8' • Oktaaf 4' • Spitsfluit 4' • Kwint 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ '
 - Vlakfluit 2' • Mikstuur 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ' V-VI • Trompet 8' • Rugwerk na Hoofwerk
 - Swelwerk na Hoofwerk

SWELWERK

- Baarpyp 8' • Salisionaal 8' • Voix Celeste 8' • Prinsipaal 4' • Koppelfluit 4'
- Nasard 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ' • Woudfluit 2' • Terts 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ' • Mikstuur 2' V-VII • Trompet 8' • Klaroen 4'
 - Hobo 8' • Tremulant

RUGWERK

- Holpyp 8' • Kwintadeen 8' • Prestant 4' • Blokfluit 4' • Oktaaf 2' • Kwint 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ '
 - Sesquialter II • Mikstuur 1' IV • Cimbels $\frac{3}{4}$ ' III • Kromhoorn 8'
 - Swelwerk na Rugwerk • Tremulant

PEDAAL

- Prestant 16' • Subbas 16' • Oktaafbas 8' • Gedek 8' • Koraalbas 4' • Gedekte fluit 4'
- Naghoorn 2' • Basuin 16' • Trompet 8' • Skalmel 4' • Hoofwerk na Pedaal
 - Swelwerk na Pedaal • Rugwerk na Pedaal

18

Koppel-
fluit

19

Nasard

$2\frac{2}{3}$

20

Woudfluit

2'



Recording Details

Recorded on the organ of NG Universiteitsoord, Pretoria,
on 24 July 2024 and 13 July 2025;

Track no. 4 recorded at Pridwin Preparatory School, Melrose, on 28 July 2025.

Production

Recording Engineer & Mixing: Johan Deysel (Ensemble Productions)

Mastering Engineer: Ludwig Bouwer (One Big Room Studios)

Producer: Isabelle van Rensburg

Credits and Acknowledgements

Artwork and Design: Coert van Rensburg (Creative Pixels)

Language Editing: Renée Marais

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Additional Photos: Pieter Jordaan

NG Universiteitsoord: I am deeply grateful to the congregation of NG Universiteitsoord for their commitment to preserving this remarkable instrument for future generations, as well as for their support that made this project possible.

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