

FAVORITE

IESTYN DAVIES

Countertenor



Lincoln Cathedral ED KLUZ (b. 1980)

2015, mixed media and paper collage
on panel, 35 x 47 1/4 in.

England's medieval cathedrals are holy places for the Grammy- and Gramophone-winning countertenor Iestyn Davies. Apart from their overt ecclesiastical functions, the cathedrals of York, Wells, Lincoln, and other cities in his native Britain represent for Davies a link between the ethereal music he sings and the vigorous architecture of the structures themselves.

"I was brought up singing in a chapel choir in Cambridge," says the 38-year-old Davies, who has been honored by HM Queen Elizabeth II with membership in the Order of the British Empire. "The English choral tradition is very mixed up with the architecture of our God-fearing ancestors. The power and beauty of medieval cathedrals are matched in much of the music we sing, and there seems to me to be endless wonder in the technical mastery of their builders."

Although Davies is originally from York, renowned for its vast Minster in which he has sung and been married, he was immediately captivated by a mixed media and paper collage work by artist Ed Kluz (b. 1980) depicting Lincoln Cathedral. "I remember seeing an advertisement for an exhibition of Kluz's works at the John Martin Gallery in London," he recalls. "The flat photography of the magazine page didn't prepare me for the shock of depth that Kluz achieves in this and similar pieces through his use of paper collage, especially in rendering the fine tracery and Gothic sculpture covering the cathedral. This work connects to my background."



While Kluz has created painted paper collages of many landmark British churches and cathedrals, he has not yet done one of York Minster. "I wished at the exhibition I saw that Ed had produced a similar picture of York. So I did the next best thing — I commissioned him to make one."

Kluz is noted for his ability to both recreate and reinterpret the venerable edifices of Britain. He begins with a sketch, followed by a painting on paper, upon which he then begins to build a multi-layered collage that becomes the building. The resulting work is, at once, two- and three-dimensional. And while his well-known buildings and manor houses, temples, and follies are immediately recognizable, Kluz often suspends them on their surfaces, as if they aren't attached to a foundation.

Prior to embarking on a career perfecting the falsetto, the male voice's highest

range, Davies studied archeology at the University of Cambridge. As a teenager at the Wells Cathedral School, he was a promising student of the oboe until, during a choir rehearsal, he was discovered to possess a hauntingly beautiful countertenor voice. He soon grew accustomed to the acoustics of such magical spaces as medieval cathedrals.

"Through becoming a classical/opera singer, revisiting much of the 18th-century Baroque repertoire, I am constantly reminded of the human connection we can make with the past through its artistic and architectural heritage," Davies explains. "There is something of both archeology and vivid performance in Kluz's picture, which captures so much of what I spend my life doing."