

James Long

Get Wisdom

James Long, *New Music's* young composer in the January/February 2009 issue of *Choir & Organ*, explains the structure of *Get Wisdom*

I chose the text for its slightly unusual use of words, as much for its meaning: the repetition of 'get' caught my eye so I wanted to emphasise it in my setting. Its hard consonants also echo the assertive imperative mood of the text. That's where the piece started: I eventually achieved the arresting feeling I wanted by creating a stuttering effect, each voice entering successively with the word 'get', but with 'wisdom' set in rhythmic unison for clarity. More wordplay occurs with 'understanding', with emphasis on the 'ding' syllable, the idea being that the lower voices haven't yet taken the message on board in the first verse. However, the pious trebles check this behaviour and the miscreants begin to listen. The second verse is more poetic, with its personification of wisdom and ideas of preservation and love. This provided an opportunity for a more lyrical section. The final verse reiterates the text's main message, so I returned to the assertive sounds of the beginning, this time with a greater air of confidence. The closing passage takes a progression heard twice before, as yet unresolved, and resolves it to a bright quasi-B major chord on the word 'understanding'; this time there is no doubt within the choir as to its importance.