

# Series title: Traces of the White Rose

Series link: <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/traces-white-rose>

## Episode title: Introduction

### Episode Description

In this episode of Traces of the White Rose, Tom Herring (Artistic Director, SANSARA) and Dr Alexandra Lloyd (Fellow by Special Election in German, St Edmund Hall, Oxford) introduce the history of the White Rose resistance: five students and a professor who stood up to Nazism and paid with their lives, and set out what to expect from the series.

### Music

Extracts from:

Johannes Brahms - Warum ist das Licht gegeben?

Peter Cornelius - Requiem

Clara Schumann - Abendfeier in Venedig

### Episode Transcript

Traces of the White Rose

SOPHIE/HANS

There is no punishment on this earth that would do justice to the crimes of Hitler and his inner circle. But out of love for the coming generations, an example must be set [...] so that no one will ever feel even the slightest inclination to commit such acts again...

TOM

Today - we live with the traces of those who dreamed of a brighter future...in times of upheaval and conflict, we search for traces of meaning to hold onto, and stories of courage and resilience to help guide us forward.

In this podcast, we're going to share a story that speaks powerfully to us today - the story of the White Rose resistance: at its heart, five students and a professor who stood up to Nazism, and paid with their lives.

Through newly-translated letters, diary entries and resistance pamphlets, we'll hear traces of their story in their own words...traces that live on to this day.

I'm Tom Herring and I'm the Artistic Director of SANSARA - a professional choir based in London...

ALEX

and I'm Dr Alexandra Lloyd, I'm a lecturer in German Studies at the University of Oxford, Director of the White Rose Project, and the author of Defying Hitler, a new book on the

White Rose...

TOM

and this podcast is the culmination of our work together, telling the story of the White Rose with new English translations by their present-day student counterparts, led by Alex...

ALEX

and alongside the texts, we've got a selection of beautiful and powerful choral music which Tom recorded with SANSARA for their album Traces.

ALEX

The White Rose was a movement that involved a wide network of young resisters, but at its core there were five students and a professor. They were all based in the southern German city of Munich in the early 1940s after the outbreak of the Second World War...

They were: Sophie Scholl, Hans Scholl, Christoph Probst, Alexander Schmorell, Willi Graf, Professor Kurt Huber

Between them, they wrote and distributed a series of resistance pamphlets, calling on their fellow Germans to mount passive resistance against the Nazi regime.

PAMPHLET

Is it not so that in the present day, every honourable German is ashamed of their government? And who among us can foresee the extent of the infamy that will be on us, and on our children, when the veil is one day lifted from our eyes and the most horrific crimes, crimes beyond all measure, come to light?

Wherever you may be, mount passive resistance.

ALEX

For me, one of the best ways to trace the story of the White Rose, is to listen to their own words. You're going to hear them in English translations produced by student members of the White Rose Project at the University of Oxford in the UK.

TOM

As well as excerpts from their resistance pamphlets, we're going to share insights into their private lives through previously untranslated letters and diary entries which reveal the human reality behind their political activism and their stoic defiance of Hitler's power...

SOPHIE

There are times when I dread the war and I'm on the brink of losing all hope. I don't like to think about it, but soon there won't be anything but politics, and as long as politics is this confused and evil, turning away from it would be cowardly.

ALEX

These texts are the traces of people who lived and risked their lives for freedom.

TOM

The music you're going to hear is mainly by English and German composers, from Heinrich

Schütz - (writing) in the 17th Century - through to new pieces by Cecilia McDowall, Philip Moore and Piers Connor Kennedy.

ALEX

We know that the members of the White Rose were all highly creative and musical people - they sang in choirs, played instruments and went to concerts together...

TOM

Professor Kurt Huber was also a musicologist and folk song collector...

ALEX

So, one of the key questions with the White Rose is - why them? Why was it that they could see so clearly what others could not? Why did they act when others did not?

One of the things I've explored in my research is how music, art, and culture might have helped them to imagine a world beyond the regime in which they were living; how it might have led them to take political action.

In early 1942, Sophie Scholl wrote:

SOPHIE

Music softens the heart; it orders its confusion, relaxes its tension, and creates the conditions for the work of the spirit in the soul which had previously knocked in vain at its tightly sealed doors. Yes, quietly and peacefully music opens the doors of the soul...

TOM

And it's this idea - music creating the conditions for the work of the spirit - which links the texts of the White Rose to the choral music we're going to hear in this series. The music represents their cultural imagination... it embodies their connections to each other - multiple voices working together to express their profound sense of responsibility to speak up and be heard.

ALEX

The White Rose resisters were in many ways regular people: they had fun with friends, they found jobs, studied at university, they fell in love, they dealt with the day-to-day difficulties life threw at them. But their courage was really remarkable - they defied the Nazi regime and called out injustice and persecution. They are equally admired by academic scholars for the same reason.

Here is Jud Newborn - historian and co-author of the book 'Sophie Scholl and the White Rose' describing...

JUD NEWBORN

It's absolutely extraordinary that these young people, this handful of young people and Professor Huber - at a time that was the darkest and the most dangerous in German history and in any oppressive regime, and isolated - would have nonetheless found the courage to look at what the regime was about.

And Rebecca Donner - author and expert on the resistance in Germany...

REBECCA DONNER

I think the White Rose demonstrates the power of youth to fight the establishment to fight for justice. They had integrity, they stood up for what they believed in, even when they knew the tremendous risks that face them in doing so. They demonstrated tremendous courage.

ALEX

We'll hear more from academics and experts on the White Rose, including Jud Newborn and Rebecca Donner whom you just heard, in a later episode.

TOM

We've split the podcast into three main parts: in Part 1, we're going to hear some of the first resistance pamphlets to get a sense of the huge risks the White Rose were taking by speaking out against the Nazi regime...

ALEX

We'll also hear a poignant series of letters and diary entries which shed light on the lives of our protagonists in the early years of the war.

TOM

Part 2 will take us deeper into the political writings of the White Rose and the moment when everything changed...

ALEX

And in Part 3 we'll hear some deeply moving last letters to their loved ones.

TOM

We've also made a fifth episode where we'll discuss the legacy of the White Rose and hear more from Alex's academic colleagues who have also studied and written about this remarkable group of resisters.

ALEX

Join us in the next episode, as we take you further into the world of the White Rose - a story of defiance, courage and love.

END OF EPISODE