

THE FIRM

SERIES 2001

Concert four

Ensemble Iona

Ensemble Iona

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| Emma Horwood | soprano |
| Matthew Rutt | alto |
| Ben Whittall | tenor |
| Alan McKie | bass |

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 18, 2001

Josquin des Pres

Ave Christe, immolate

Quentin S.D. Grant

Hymns to the Night

SHORT INTERVAL

David Kotlowy

Dharma-Gate Dharani

Raymond Chapman Smith

Psalm

Arnold Schoenberg

Three Folksongs

Josquin des Pres (c. 1440-1521)

Ave Christe, immolate

As with so much of Josquin's output, especially the sacred and secular motets, "Ave Christe, immolate" has a slightly questionable provenance and yet the textural variety, pairings of voices and the constant interchange of vertical and horizontal presentation, are so characteristic of Josquin's late manner that his authorship would seem hard to doubt, particularly when these technical considerations are so much at the service of an expressive character that made Josquin the most revered composer of his time.

Quentin SD Grant

Hymns to the Night

First published in 1800 the Hymnen an die Nacht were written by "Novalis", nom-de-plume of Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772-1801) and is recognised as one of the first masterpieces of German romanticism (its influence can be seen running through the work of Heine, Nietzsche, Hesse, Rilke and beyond). An exploration of the Night in all its guises, it manages to infuse the idea of Darkness with a glow of spiritual richness and meaning. Rather than seeing Darkness as absence or finality, Novalis approaches it as being potential or beginning: rather than only the grave he also pursues the analogy of the womb. As one, being human, troubled by darkness and death I found the work a revelation and a turning point in my thinking. I have tried to capture the essence of part of the work in a very reduced form for this choral setting. For those interested, read the whole work of 15 pages or so to appreciate its full power.

Hymns to the Night (adapted by the composer)

The all joyful light shines.

From the restless stars it comes.

It swims, a blue tide of splendour.

But I turn away to the holy, holy night.

Down far over there lies the world,
Sunken in a deep vault.
Darkest Night holds a velvet blanket over its grave.
Night, how may I describe you?
Your cloak is complete, your eyes are endless.
You raise the soul's wings.
Night, you are the Mother,
In you I find love's secret offering,
In you I find a place shared by all.

Light's time was lightly measured out to it.
Night's reign is timeless,
Night's reign is spaceless.
We see you in the grape's golden flood,
In a flower's fragrance,
We see your gaze in a baby's eyes.
In the silence between heartbeats.
For your reign is wholly timeless.

Are you pleased with us dark Night?
What grabs so unseen at my soul?
I see a face so startled with joy.
It bends to me so softly.
Have you also a human heart Dark Night,
Down under your misty veil?
I see a child-like face,
A soft face of love, Of the Mother.

Flickering light is silent and distant,
Each flash short and distant soft.
The sweet flashing stars, sweet stars,
Only serve to show,
How wide the dark is,
How deep the Night is,
How serene is the Night's purpose.
The glimmer is only a moment out of time.

So I turn to the Night once more,
To the rich heart of mercy.
My loneliness now finds
A place being shared by all.
My secret heart stays true to the Night,
To the deep eternal Night.

David Kotlowy

Dharma-Gate Dharani

The Zen Buddhist path is presented in the brief verse known in Japanese as Shigu Seigan Mon (Great Vows For All). The text and inspiration for my piece are taken from the third of these vows: Homon muryo seigangaku (Dharma-gates are countless, I vow to wake to them).

Dharma is the vast and fathomless universe: void on the one hand, full and complete on the other. From potent emptiness, as potent emptiness, come forth riches, the elements of our universe. Thus another meaning of Dharma is "phenomena".

Being a composer, I am concerned with the phenomena of sound. Like all phenomena, sound arises, sound dwells, sound disappears. A flautist of the Honkyoku shakuhachi aims for ichion jobutsu – "reaching awakening in one single sound." As a result, a fine tone is not a goal of playing; all sounds are potential treasures.

Dharani means "hymn of praise". Each sound exists entirely for our benefit – a Dharma-gate inviting us to enter, to waken. To do this, we must leave the mind-road; we do not need anything except to attend this moment. Awake to the Dharma, every moment is brand-new; a fresh sound never heard before.

This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the birth of Morton Feldman. Like Dharma-Gates Dharani, his later compositions were not

goal-oriented works. "I prefer," he said, "never knowing when you are gonna hear something."

Shujo muhen seigando

Bonno mujin seigandan

Homon muryo seigangaku

Butsido mujo seiganjo.

The many beings are numberless, I vow to save them;

Greed, hatred, and ignorance rise endlessly, I vow to abandon them;

Dharma-gates are countless, I vow to wake to them;

Buddha's Way is unsurpassed, I vow to embody it fully.

Raymond Chapman Smith

Psalm

"Psalm" is a text from Paul Celan's "Die Niemandrose" (The no one's rose) a crucial cycle of poems that were published in 1963. In the twenty-five years since his death in 1970, the Rumanian-German-Jewish poet, Paul Celan has become clearly perceived as one of the two or three greatest German-language poets of the 20th century. As the critic George Steiner wrote: "Celan is almost certainly the major European poet after 1945.... I knew with certainty that the poems and the voice of Paul Celan would alter my inner existence as only the very greatest art, music, philosophic-metaphysical argument of poetry can do... let him enter your life. At risk. Knowing that he will change it."

In setting this richly resonant poem I have given each verse its own brief movement with the texts spun out into what seems to me rather Baroque iterations. As with all my now quite numerous settings of Celan (he doesn't let go of you) the spine of the music, its central thread, is the 20th century's only great piece of plainsong; the overpowering "Shema Yisroel" that closes Arnold Schoenberg's "A Survivor from Warsaw" Op.46. The text is set in the original German.

Psalm

No one moulds us again out of earth and clay,
no one conjures our dust.
No one.

Praised be your name, no one.

For your sake

we shall flower.

Towards

you.

A nothing

we were, are, shall

remain, flowering:

the nothing -, the

no one's rose.

With

our pistil soul-bright,

with our stamen heaven-ravaged,

our corolla red

with the crimson word which we sang

over, O over

the thorn.

Arnold Schoenberg

Three Folksongs Op. 49

In 1948 Arnold Schoenberg arranged these three, 15th- and 16th-century German folk songs and gave them his penultimate opus number. Earlier versions of these charming pieces date from 1929 – arrangements for mixed choir and solo voice and piano – but this late version is the most refined and reveals Schoenberg, even in this very relaxed mode, as the last great master of tonal counterpoint, a sovereign technique which informs all his music.

Matthew Rutter wrote eight Contraltos in 2000 when he conducted his studies with KODI. Matthew is a founding member of Sydney's award-winning vocal ensemble, The Contraltos, who sing with small chamber music ensembles such as Dulcino Consort and Consort. He has been a soloist with several

Ensemble Iona named for the remote Scottish island monastery founded by St. Columba in AD563, is a new chamber music medium for THE FIRM. The members of Ensemble Iona will be well known to many listeners as established members of South Australia's leading choral ensemble – Adelaide Chamber Singers. THE FIRM is particularly grateful to the singers and ACS renowned director Carl Crossin for making this venture possible.

Emma Horwood is currently finishing a Bachelor of Music at Adelaide University, majoring in harp. She has played with the Adelaide Youth Orchestra, the Elder Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra and the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, and performs at weddings and functions. Emma began singing three-and-a-half years ago when she joined Voiceworks at the Flinders Street School of Music, touring with the group to Europe in 2000. She currently studies voice with Keith Hempton, and has been a core member of Adelaide Chamber Singers for two years. This year she has performed as soloist with the Gallerie Consort, the Choir of St. Peters Cathedral, and the Cantabile Singers. Emma particularly enjoys chamber music, and is very excited about being a part of Ensemble Iona for The Firm.

Matthew Ruty started singing Countertenor in 2000, when he commenced his studies with Keith Hempton. Matthew is a founding member of Syntony, a one-voice-to-a-part ensemble. He particularly enjoys singing with small chamber music ensembles, such as Gallerie Consort and Camarata. He has been a core member and soloist with

Adelaide Chamber Singers since 1989. In 2002, Matthew will make his operatic debut when he plays the principal role of Akhnaten in Philip Glass's opera for the State Opera of South Australia. In his spare time, Matthew is very partial to sampling fine ales.

Ben Whittall has been a core member and soloist in Adelaide Chamber Singers since 1999, and has toured with the group to England and Singapore. He also directs the Gallerie Consort, the chamber choir of Bethlehem Lutheran Church. He studies voice with Keith Hempton, and has sung solos with Certain Notes, St. Peters Cathedral Choir, FUCS, and the ASO. He is a founding member of Syntony, a one-voice-to-a-part ensemble specialising in Renaissance, Baroque and Contemporary music.

For over thirty years **Alan McKie** has been a vocal soloist and chorister on Adelaide's music scene. He sang professionally with the ABC Adelaide Singers for a time, and has been a teacher of singing on the part-time staff of both the Elder Conservatorium and the Flinders Street School of Music. He has been a member of the esteemed Adelaide Chamber Singers since its inception in 1985, and also sings with the recently formed vocal ensemble Syntony.

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