



EX CATHEDRA
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Into a World Unknown



CHOIR | CONSORT | ORCHESTRA | EDUCATION
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR JEFFREY SKIDMORE



Birmingham
City Council



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

Into a World Unknown

In memoriam Christopher Bullough
Sunday 23th May 2021, 4pm

Rang dekh jiya lalchaye	Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty (b.1952)
Hanac pachap cussicuinin (vv. 1 and 20)	Anonymous (Lima, 1631)
M and A and R and I (world premiere)	Edward Caine (b.1980)
And I saw a new heaven	Edgar L. Bainton (1880-1956)
My Guardian Angel	Judith Weir (b.1954)
St Aidan's Prayer	Roxanna Panufnik (b.1968)
Earthrise Part III	Alec Roth (b.1948)
O Lorde, the maker of al thing	John Joubert (1927-2019)
Come, Holy Ghost	Jonathan Harvey (1939-2012)

READING - We must not think ourselves victims (Mental Fight) - Ben Okri (b.1959)

Stand by me	Ben E. King (1938-2015) arr. Alexander L'Estrange
Skye Boat Song	arr. Jeffrey Skidmore
'Tis you that are the music (world premiere)	Alec Roth
Jerusalem/Blake reimagined	Sir Hubert Parry (1848-1918) Liz Dilnot Johnson (b.1964)
Alles, was Odem hat final fugue from <i>Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied</i> , BWV225	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

READING - And am I born to die? - Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Why fum'th in fight	Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)
The cloud-capp'd towers from <i>Three Shakespeare Songs</i>	Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
Ach Herr, laß dein lieb Engelein	Johann Sebastian Bach
How shall I fitly meet thee?	Johann Sebastian Bach
Dulce Jesús mío	Anonymous

Performers

Ex Cathedra

Jeffrey Skidmore *conductor*

Rupert Jeffcoat *organ*

Debipriya Sircar *Indian classical singer*

Soprano Marianne Ayling, Alison Burnett, Ros Crouch, Clare Edwards, Rosy Heneghan, Joy Krishnamoorthy, Rebecca Ledgard, Margaret Lingas, Rebecca Mills, Imogen Russell*, Shirley Scott, Rachel Snape, Sally Spencer, Katie Trethewey, Suzzie Vango

Alto Jonathan Darbourne, Sacha Fullerton, Harriet Hougham Slade, Gabriella Liandu*, Ksynia Loeffler, Katy Raines-Rami, Kate Thatcher

Tenor Tim Burton*, Steve Davis, Nick Drew, Sidharth Prabhu-Naik, James Robinson, Iain Sloan, Ashley Turnell

Bass Robert Asher, Richard Green, Thomas Lowen, Themba Mvula, Bill Robinson, David Smith, Jeff Sutherland-Kay, Lawrence White

*Indicates Graduate Scholars 2020-21

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Thank you from all of us at Ex Cathedra.

Programme Note

This programme **Into a world unknown** is a feast of choral music which Ex Cathedra loves to sing. It commemorates our year of lockdown and celebrates what we have learnt, what we have achieved and what we hope for the future. It has been a very difficult time for all our musicians but there have been some positives.

In the last fourteen months Ex Cathedra has learnt to make Zoom videos with individual parts recorded in isolation in musicians' homes and then stitched together to make a film. You may remember Easter Trilogy, Christ rising again, Summer Holiday, The First 50 years and Around the World. They are still available on our website. Some of the music features in this afternoon's programme now being performed live (hurrah!) to an audience. We also made films with musicians suitably distanced, in CBSO Centre and Symphony Hall - First Love, Christmas Music by Candlelight, Baroque Passion and most recently Bach's St John Passion. Our local composers have been very productive and have written us some wonderful new repertoire. This programme includes many composers with local connections - Bainton, Harvey, Joubert, Panufnik, Roth, Dilnot Johnson and Caine. There is music from further afield too including the USA, Peru, Bolivia, India and Australia. With a heavy heart in the final part of the programme we remember those who have died during this awful period and we offer them redemptive music by Vaughan Williams, Bach and a short recessional hymn from the Chiquitos Indians in the Amazon jungle.

The concert begins with the Indian classical singer Debipriya Sircar improvising vocally and on the sitar, singing **Rang dekh jiya lalchaye** written by her guru Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty. This song is set in the ancient city of Brij during the Spring festival of Holi and is sung from the perspective of a devotee of the Lord Krishna. Debi is a stunning performer and a member of the ensemble *Tempus Fugit* who I first heard in 2016 performing the powerful musical drama *Calcutta* in Wilton's Music Hall in London. She was to have been part of Ex Cathedra's Indian Classical Experience Week in July 2020. She

has taken part in two recent virtual video recordings and will be a part of the celebration of Indian Classical culture now planned as part of our Commonwealth Games performances in 2022. We welcome her now for her first live concert with Ex Cathedra.

The heightened excitement of this Hindi song is a beautiful prelude to Ex Cathedra's well-loved Inca Hymn to the Virgin **Hanac Pachap**, written in Quechua and published in 1631. This magnificent processional is the oldest polyphony published in the Americas and is a suitable, small tribute to the Mayflower anniversary which we were unable to celebrate in November last year!

M and A and R and I is another Marian song written in Middle English and premiered here in a setting by Edward Caine, my research assistant and composer living in the Black Country. He writes:

After looking for the source manuscript of Adam lay i-bownden, I became engrossed in a collection of carols and songs which contains it, categorised in the British Library as Sloane MS 2593. The texts in this collection are without music. It is a fascinating 14-15th century Middle-English collection and includes Christmas carols, drinking songs and mysterious riddle poems. M and A and R and I is one of a number of Marian hymns which venerate the virgin mother.

The extraordinary text echoes the Stabat Mater poem, describing Mary visiting Jesus on the cross. The language is rich and beautiful, and I wanted to make a texture out of the refrain, which is repeated often in the text as a chant. In my setting I have one choir chanting the refrain, a slow, repetitive structure, while Choir 2 sing ecstatically to emote the text.

And I saw a new heaven are the visionary words of St John the Divine found in

Revelation, the last book in the Bible. The words not only describe a New Heaven, but also a New Earth and a New Jerusalem in an attempt to portray a perfect world and human aspirations. Surprisingly, this wonderful text has been set by only a few composers (MacMillan also set the words at the end of Ex Cathedra's commission *Seven Angels*). Edgar Bainton's setting from 1928 is beautifully melodic and effortlessly reaches the heart of this extraordinary text. He was a pupil at King Henry VIII Grammar School in Coventry where he showed great ability at an early age and went on to study at the Royal College of Music. His choral works featured at the Three Choirs Festival and he championed Elgar in Australia, where he emigrated in 1934. He conducted the first Australian performance of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* in Sydney in 1936. Although a prolific composer, his most famous piece is this anthem.

Judith Weir's double-choir setting of William Blake's **My Guardian Angel** was introduced to Ex Cathedra by Hilary Campbell who is our third Associate Conductor and will conduct this performance. Hilary has been a marvellously supportive colleague in these challenging times and has coped admirably with every opportunity offered.

This piece links perfectly with Roxanna Panufnik's serenely beautiful setting of **St Aidan's Prayer** sung in English by the choir and in Italian by a soprano soloist, originally Roxanna's son Ben. St Aidan was an Irish monk who established an influential Christian community and a monastic priory on the island of Lindisfarne. He was its first bishop and became known as the Apostle of Northumbria.

Alec Roth's music has played an important part in the life of Ex Cathedra for the last fourteen years and he has written for us some of the great choral pieces of the first part of this century. **Earthrise** was originally a mammoth, unaccompanied, eight choir, 40-part anthem to celebrate Ex Cathedra's 40th anniversary in 2009. We have performed it many times in this form and our recording has enabled the work to be known and performed worldwide. **Earthrise** now exists in several forms and today we sing section three in the

double choir version where a small, concertino group contrasts with a full, ripieno choir in the manner of a concerto grosso. It also now has an organ accompaniment. The impact is as overwhelming as ever with the spine-tingling final melody never failing to create shivers.

Birmingham's John Joubert is one of England's leading composers and Ex Cathedra is proud to have had a long association with him. In 1983 Ex Cathedra was invited by John to give the first performance of *Three Portraits* at the Cork International Festival and a few years later in 1985 Ex Cathedra commissioned its first work *South of the Line*, which was performed at the opening of the Adrian Boult Hall. We subsequently recorded the work on our own label with the first recording of the *Rorate coeli motets*. To celebrate the Millennium Ex Cathedra commissioned the first part of a new Oratorio *Wings of Faith* which was intended as a 21st century contribution to our exploration of the history of the Oratorio. The complete work was premiered in the Oratory with the CBSO in March 2007. John's award-winning anthem **O Lorde, the maker of al thing**, whose text is thought to have been written by Henry VIII, was written in 1952 and was one of his first great miniatures

Jonathan Harvey was born in Sutton Coldfield. **Come, Holy Ghost** is an imaginative and dramatically personalised setting of the well-known Pentecostal hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*. The plainchant melody appears in several forms but is always clearly audible. The final aleatoric section provides a powerfully graphic realisation of the inspirational 'tongues of fire'. The work was composed in 1984. It is appropriate that for the full choir's first live concert to an audience since January 2020 we are inspired by Pentecost on the very day of its festival. It takes place on the 50th day after Easter (May 23 2021) when the Apostles were given the spirit of God with tongues of fire with Mary, the mother of God playing an important role.

Ex Cathedra first performed **Stand by me** with a team of our vocal tutors and several schools from Tower Hamlets in London to the charismatic Desmond Tutu (it was his favourite song) and Bob Geldof as part of

One Young World which was being launched in Old Billingsgate in 2010. I can remember clearly Bishop Tutu high-fiving every single choir-member as they left the stage. What enthusiasm! More recently we made a recording as a Virtual Reality Video to help people suffering isolation and loneliness during the pandemic. It is a fun piece, the message is powerfully supportive and features some of our jazzers !

The hauntingly beautiful Scottish **Skye Boat Song**, which dates from the 19th century, tells of the flight of Bonnie Prince Charlie to the Isle of Skye following defeat at the battle of Culloden in 1746. It was recorded for the Virtual Reality video to offer a different sort of escape.

In 1916 Parry was commissioned to set Blake's idealistic, visionary poem *And did those feet in ancient time*. Now widely used and familiar as the patriotic hymn **Jerusalem**, this is an opportunity for us to reclaim it as a stirring piece of music set to a text by one of our greatest metaphysical poets. A hundred years later **Blake Reimagined** is again a rallying call to action to rebuild a better world. It was commissioned in the middle of the pandemic from Malvern-based composer Liz Dilnot Johnson, who is fast becoming another Ex Cathedra composer-in-residence. This inspirational *piece* with its fusion of English, Indian classical and jazz improvisation, makes use of Parry's hymn *Jerusalem*, with its stirring, romantic harmonies, full of longing, and with snatches of the famously uplifting melody never far away.

'Tis **you that are the music** was written for my 70th birthday which I celebrated in February. It is a very precious gift from an inspirational friend.

We recorded the final fugue (**Alles was Odem hat**) from Bach's fabulous double-choir motet *Singet dem Herrn* as part of a virtual video last summer. It is quite a workout and was designed to keep singers in shape in their isolation!

The final sequence is dedicated to Christopher Bullough who died on March 25 2020. He was

one of my oldest and dearest friends. He was a founder member of Ex Cathedra who sang with us for almost 25 years and was our first Chairman. As a Classics scholar he dreamt up the name Ex Cathedra. Many of you will have fond memories of him - his laser beam alto and extraordinarily focussed folk-baritone, inspired by Jantina Norman. He was a master of the Somerset Wassail! I also remember his exquisitely delicate falsetto at the age of 18 (reminiscent of Alfred Deller at the height of his powers) when Chris was my inspirational Head Boy at an RSCM camping week singing daily services at St Asaph Cathedral in Wales. The Charles Wesley Hymn **And am I born to die?** was one of his favourites and he sang it many times to the tune *Egypt* with the group Immanuel's Ground.

Jeffrey Skidmore

Jeffrey Skidmore May 2021



Ex Cathedra in Lausanne with Christopher Bullough

Texts and translations

Rang dekh jiya lalchaye - Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty (b.1952)

Rang dekh jiya lalchaye

Dekho Kanha Brij mein hori machaaye

Abir gulal thaar bhari hai
Ritu basanth me umang machi hai
Dekhney ko jiya leheraiye harsaye

My heart quickens at the sight of such
beautiful colours

Look at Krishna's playfulness during the Holi
festival

The plates are filled with coloured powders
Our emotions are heightened in the Spring
My heart always quickens, just seeing him
(Lord Krishna)

Hanac pachap cussicuinin - Anonymous (Lima, 1631)

Hanac pachap cussicuinin,
huarã cacta muchascaiqui.
Yupairuru pucocmallqui,
runa cunap suiacuinin.
Callpannacpa quemicuinin,
Huaciascaita.

Gloria cachun Dios yayapac
Dios churipac hinallatac
Sancto Espiritu pac huantac
Cachun gloria, viñaillapac
Cauçaicunap, cauçainimpac
Cusicachun, Amen.

Translation by Rosaleen Howard

The bliss of heaven,
I will worship you a thousandfold.
Revered fruit of a mature tree,
Long awaited by your people.
Protection of spiritual strength,
Heed my call.

May there be glory for the Lord
And for his son likewise
And also for the Holy Ghost
May there be glory for all eternity
For the life of all sustenance
May there be delight, Amen.

M and A and R and I (world premiere) - Edward Caine (b.1980) *Anonymous 14th/15th Century Middle English*

*M and A and R and I,
Syngyn I wyl a newe song.*

IT wern fowre letterys of purposy,
M and A, R and I,
Tho wern letteris of Mary,
Of hom al our joye sprong.

On the mownt of Calvory,
With M and A, R and I,
There he betyn his bryte body
With schorges that wern bothe scharp and
long.

*M and A and R and I,
Sing I will a new song.*

They are four letters of purpose,
M and A, R and I,
Those were letters of Mary,
Of whom all our joy has sprung.

On the mount of Calvary,
With M and A, R and I,
There they beat* his bright body
With lashes* that were both sharp and
long.

Our swete lady stod hym by,
With M and A, R and I,
Che wept water with here ey,
And alwey the blod folwyd among.

Our sweet* lady stood by him,
With M and A, R and I,
She wept water with her eyes,
And always the blood flowed amid* [it]

God that sit above the sky,
With M and A, and R and I,
Save now al this company,
And send us joye and blysse ammong.

God that sits above the sky
With M and A, and R and I,
save now all this company,
And send us joy and bliss [alongside]*.

Modern English translation by Janet Walker and Edward Caine

**tonight's performance will incorporate a mixture of Modern and Middle English*

And I saw a new heaven - Edgar L. Bainton (1880-1956)

Text: Revelations XXI, vv.1-4

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth:
For the first heaven and the first earth were passed away;
and there was no more sea.
And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,
coming down from God out of heaven,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying,
'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,
and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people,
and God himself shall be with them and be their God.
And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;
And there shall be no more death,
neither sorrow nor crying,
neither shall there be any more pain,
for the former things are passed away.

My Guardian Angel - Judith Weir (b.1954)

Text: William Blake (1757-1827)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.
The Angel that presided o'ver my birth said,
"Little Creature form'd of Joy and Mirth,
Go Love without the help of anything on Earth".
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

St Aidan's Prayer - Roxanna Panufnik (b.1968)
Preghiera di Sant'Aidan di Lindisfarne

Bless O Lord, this place.
This Holy Place,
Make it a place of joy and light
Make it a place of holiness and hospitality,
Make it a place of grace and goodness.
And begin with me.
Benedici Signore, questo luogo
Questo luogo Santo,
Rendilo un luogo di gioia e di luce
Rendilo un luogo di santita' e di ospitalita'
Rendilo un luogo di grazia e di bonta'
A cominciare da me.

Earthrise (Part III) - Alec Roth (b.1948)

Audite haec, omnes gentes;
auribus percipite, omnes qui habitatis orbem,
quique terrigenae, et filii hominum, in unum,
dives et pauper.
Os meum loquetur sapientiam, et meditatio
cordis mei prudentiam.

Psalm 48(49): 1-3

Dominus sapientia fundavit terram;
stabilivit caelos prudentia.
Sapientia illius eruperunt abyssi,
et nubes rore concreverunt.
Fili mi, ne effluant haec ab oculis tuis;

custodi legem atque consilium,
Et erit vita animae tuae,
et gratia faucibus tuis.
Tunc ambulabis fiducialiter in via tua,
et pes tuus non inpinget.

Beatus homo qui invenit sapientiam,
et qui affluit prudentia.
Melior est adquisitio eius negotiatione argenti;
et auro primo fructus eius.
Pretiosior est cunctis opibus;
et omnia quae desiderantur huic non valent
comparari.

Hear this, all you nations;
pay heed, all you inhabitants of the globe,
all you that are earth-born, and you children
of men, all as one, rich and poor.
My mouth shall speak of wisdom, and
the meditation of my heart shall be of
understanding.

The Lord by wisdom founded the earth;
he established the heavens by understanding.
By his wisdom the deeps burst forth,
and the clouds grow thick with moisture.
My child, let not these things escape from
your eyes;

guard the law and keep good counsel,
And they will be life to your soul,
and adornment to your neck.
Then you will walk securely in your way,
and your foot will not stumble.

Blessed is the man that finds wisdom,
and who is rich in understanding.
It is better to acquire her than goods of silver;
and better than purest gold is her revenue.
She is more precious than great riches;
and all that could be desired cannot be
compared with her.

Longitudo dierum in dextera eius;
in sinistra illius divitiae et gloria.
Viae eius viae pulchrae; et omnes semitae
illius pacificae.
Lignum vitae est his qui adprehenderit eam;
et qui tenuerit eam beatus.

Length of days is in her right hand;
in her left hand, riches and glory.
Her ways are ways of beauty; and all her paths
are peaceful.
A tree of life she is to them that lay hold of
her; and those who hold her fast are blessed.

Proverbs 3: 19-23, 13-18

O sapientia, quae ex ore altissimi prodisti,
attingens a fine usque ad finem,
fortiter suaviter disponensque omnia:
veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiae.

O wisdom, which came out of the mouth of
the most high,
reaching from one end all the way to the
other, mightily and graciously ordering
all things: come and teach us the way of
understanding.

Antiphon (Great Advent Antiphon 1)

O Lorde, the maker of al thing - John Joubert (1927-2019)
Text: King Henry VIII (1491-1547)

O Lorde, the maker of al thing,
We pray Thee nowe in this evening
Us to defende, through Thy mercy,
From al deceite of our en'my.

Let neither us deluded be,
Good Lorde, with dreame or phantasy,
Oure hearte wakyng in Thee Thou kepe,
That we in sinne fal not on slepe.

O Father, throughe Thy blessed Sonne,
Grant us this oure petition,
To whom with the Holy Ghost alwaies,
In heav'n and yearth be laude and praise.

Come, Holy Ghost - Jonathan Harvey (1939-2012)
Text: Bishop J. Cosin (1594-1672)

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire;
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.

Thy blessed unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love;
Enable with perpetual light
The dullness of our blinded sight.

Anoint and cheer our soiled face
With the abundance of thy grace;
Keep far our foes, give peace at home;
Where thou art guide no ill can come.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And three of Both to be but One
That through the ages all along
This may be our endless song,

Praise to thy eternal merit,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Stand By Me - Ben E. King (1938-2015)
arr. Alexander L'Estrange

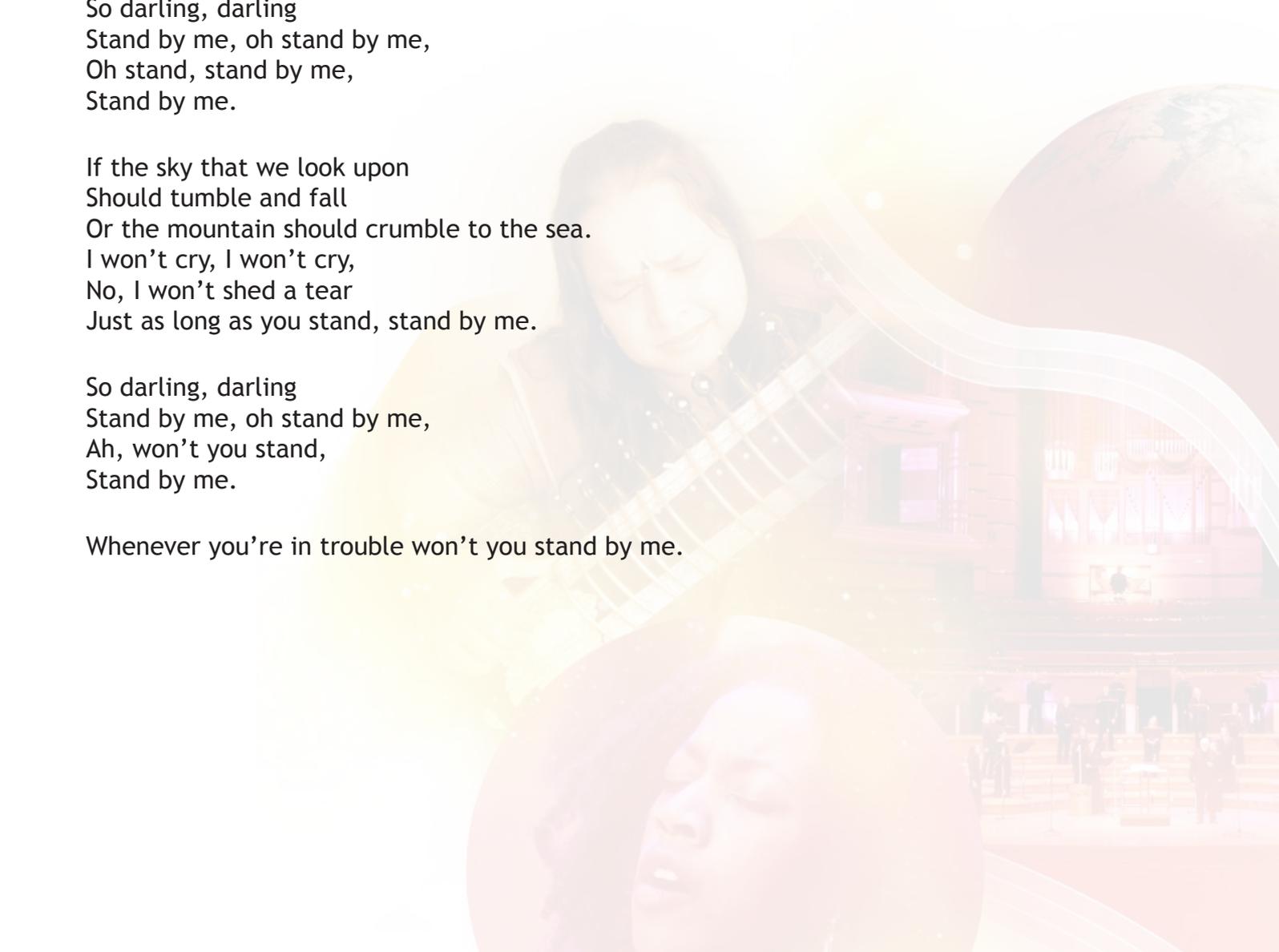
When the night has come,
And the land is dark,
And the moon is the only light we'll see.
No I won't be afraid,
No I won't shed tear,
Just as long as you stand, stand by me.

So darling, darling
Stand by me, oh stand by me,
Oh stand, stand by me,
Stand by me.

If the sky that we look upon
Should tumble and fall
Or the mountain should crumble to the sea.
I won't cry, I won't cry,
No, I won't shed a tear
Just as long as you stand, stand by me.

So darling, darling
Stand by me, oh stand by me,
Ah, won't you stand,
Stand by me.

Whenever you're in trouble won't you stand by me.



Skye Boat Song - Trad. Scottish
arr. Jeffrey Skidmore

Speed, bonnie boat, like a bird on the wing,
Onward the sailors cry.
Carry the lad that is born to be king
Over the sea to Skye.

Loud the winds howl, loud the waves roar,
Thunderclaps rend the air;
Baffled our foes stand by the shore,
Follow they will not dare.

Speed, bonnie boat, like a bird on the wing,
Onward the sailors cry;
Carry the lad that's born to be king
Over the sea to Skye.

Though the waves leap, soft shall ye sleep,
Ocean's a royal bed.
Rock'd in the deep, Flora will keep
Watch o'er your weary head.

Speed, bonnie boat, like a bird on the wing,
Onward the sailors cry.
Carry the lad that is born to be king
Over the sea to Skye.

'Tis you that are the music (world premiere) - Alec Roth (b.1948)

Text: Amy Lowell (1874-1925) 'Listening'

'Tis you that are the music, not your song.
The song is but a door which, opening wide,
Lets forth the pent-up melody inside,
Your spirit's harmony, which clear and strong
Sings but of you. Throughout your whole life long
Your songs, your thoughts, your doings, each divide
This perfect beauty; waves within a tide,
Or single notes amid a glorious throng.
The song of Earth has many different chords;
Ocean has many moods and many tones
Yet always Ocean. In the damp Spring woods
The painted trillium smiles, while crisp pine cones
Autumn alone can ripen. So is this
One music with a thousand cadences.

Jerusalem/Blake Reimagined - Sir Hubert Parry (1848-1918)/

Liz Dilnot Johnson (b.1964)

Text: William Blake (1757-1827)

And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the Holy Lamb of God,
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among those dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green & pleasant land.

Alles was Odem hat - Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

From Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, BWV 225

Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn
Halleluja!

Let all that has breath praise the Lord,
Hallelujah!

Why fum'th in fight - Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

Text: Archbishop Matthew Parker (1504-1575)

Why fum'th in fight: the Gentiles spyght:
in fury ragyng stout?
Why taketh in hand: the people fond:
vayn thinges to bryng about?
The kyngs arise: the lordes devise:
in counsayles met thereto:
Agaynst the Lord: wyth false accord:
agaynst hys Christ they go.

The cloud-capp'd towers - Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
Text: William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind: We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

Ach Herr, lass dein lieb Engelein - Johann Sebastian Bach
Chorale from St John Passion, BWV 245

Ach Herr, lass dein lieb Engelein
am letzten End die Seele mein
in Abrahams Schoß tragen,
den Leib in seim Schlafkämmerlein
gar sanft ohn einge Qual und Pein
ruhn bis am jüngsten Tage!
Alsdenn vom Tod erwecke mich,
dass meine Augen sehen dich
in aller Freud, o Gottes Sohn,
mein Heiland und Genadenthron!
Herr Jesu Christ, erhöre mich,
ich will dich preisen ewiglich!

Ah Lord, let your dear angels
at my final hour carry my soul
to Abraham's bosom,
while my body in its narrow chamber
gently without pain or torment
rests until the last day!
Wake me then from death,
so that my eyes see you
in all joy, o God's son,
my Saviour and throne of mercy!
Lord Jesus Christ, hear me,
I shall praise you eternally!

How shall I fitly meet Thee - Johann Sebastian Bach
Chorale from Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248

How shall I fitly meet Thee
and give Thee welcome due?
The nations long to greet Thee,
and I would greet Thee, too.
O Fount of light, shine brightly
upon my darkened heart;
That I may serve Thee rightly
and know Thee as Thou art.

Dulce Jesús mío - Anonymous

Yyaî Jesuchristo apoquîrui,
itacu niyucîpî ninahît' zobi.

My sweet Jesus look with mercy
on my soul lost through mortal guilt.

Dulce Jesús mío mirad con piedad
mi alma perdida por culpa mortal.

Ex Cathedra



Founded in 1969 by Jeffrey Skidmore, Ex Cathedra has become a unique musical resource - a specialist chamber choir, vocal [Consort](#), period- instrument [orchestra](#) and a thriving [education programme](#) - aiming to explore, research and commission the finest choral music and to set the highest standards for excellence in performance and training.

We are known for our passion for seeking out the best, the unfamiliar and the unexpected in the choral repertoire, and for giving high quality performances underpinned by detailed research.

We present a series of concerts in Birmingham, where we are an Associate Artist at Town Hall & Symphony Hall, across the Midlands, and in London. We also enjoy invitations to appear at festivals and concert series across the UK and as far afield as Tel Aviv and New York.

Ex Cathedra has made a significant number of award-winning recordings for Hyperion, NMC, Orchid Classics, SOMM, Signum, and on our own label. The most recent release is a CD of choral music by Penelope Thwaites titled *From Five Continents*, released in spring 2020.

Our extensive programme of award-winning schools and community projects is led by a team of expert Vocal Tutors, who are all members of Ex Cathedra. [Singing Playgrounds](#) has reached over 1,000 primary schools across the UK and also schools in Belgium, China, New Zealand, Singapore, Uganda and Thailand. Arts in Health projects include [Singing Medicine](#) which takes place every week on every ward at Birmingham Children's Hospital and [Singing Pathways](#) which brings wellbeing and communication benefits to adults who have had a stroke or who have dementia.

Nurturing talent is at the heart of our work, and our [Academy of Vocal Music](#) provides a choral training pathway for children and young people aged 4-18. Our choral [Scholarships](#) programme provides a year-long scheme for recent graduates as they establish their professional singing career, and Student Scholarships provide opportunities for singers studying at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Throughout 2020, Hilary Campbell is working very closely with Ex Cathedra and Jeffrey as our current [Associate Conductor](#).

www.excathedra.co.uk

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From the throne

We are often asked about our name. 'Cathedra' is the name for a bishop's throne, and a cathedral is the building that houses that throne. When Jeffrey Skidmore and one of the founding members of the choir were choosing a name for the new group in 1969, they chose Ex Cathedra because it literally means 'from the throne' or in English usage 'with authority'. At the time, Jeffrey and several members of the choir sang at Birmingham Cathedral. The pun was attractive, and researching the repertoire so that it can be performed with authority, style and passion has been a guiding principle since those first performances.

Jeffrey Skidmore

PHOTOGRAPH BY NEIL PUGH



Jeffrey Skidmore's reputation as one of the UK's leading choral directors and an ardent advocate of the importance of singing in people's lives today is rooted in his work with Ex Cathedra, the ensemble he founded 50 years ago in his home city of Birmingham.

Jeffrey's driving passion has been to refresh and reinvigorate the choral repertoire and to make it accessible to as many people as possible. He and Ex Cathedra have long been known for exciting and innovative but always attractive programming, underpinned by research. Under his direction, Ex Cathedra has also shown an enduring commitment to vocal education from its ground-breaking children's singing

programme, Singing Playgrounds, to the nurturing of professional singers at the start of their careers.

As director of Ex Cathedra and its associated Consort and Baroque Orchestra, Jeffrey has appeared in concert halls and festivals across the UK and overseas. He has made a number of highly-acclaimed recordings ranging from Renaissance polyphony to Latin American and French Baroque. He has also worked with other ensembles including the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Aalborg Sinfoniorkester, the Irish Baroque Orchestra and the BBC Singers.

In the field of opera he has worked with Birmingham Opera Company; Welsh National Opera; Marc Minkowski and David McVicker at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; and has given the first performances in modern times of the French Baroque operas *Zaïde* by Royer and *Isis* by Lully. Jeffrey is a pioneer in the field of research and performance of choral works of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, both in the old and new worlds. He is also a champion of contemporary choral music and has commissioned more than a dozen new works in recent years.

Jeffrey is a Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham and Artistic Director of the Early Music programme at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. He is a regular contributor to the choral programme at Dartington International Summer School and to a wide range of choral workshops and summer schools at home and abroad.

Jeffrey has been recognised with an OBE for services to choral music, and an honorary doctorate from the University of Birmingham.

For more information click [here](#).

Debipriya Sircar



Sitarist and vocalist Debipriya Sircar (née Das) was born and brought up in London. She began learning music at the age of 4 from her mother and her early gurus were the late Pandit Manesh Chandra Kansara (sitar) and the late Sri Golak Mohan Choudhury (vocal).

Since 2003, Debipriya has been a disciple of Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty, one of the finest exponents of North Indian Classical Vocal music and has received vocal training at workshops conducted in the UK.

Debipriya played the role of ‘Indian Queen’ in the opera pastiche, ‘Calcutta’, an innovative music & theatre project

created by Baroque group, ‘Ensemble Tempus Fugit’, with musical direction by Katie De La Matter.

Based in Stratford (East London) Debipriya combines her music with a full-time job as a Flow Cytometrist at The Francis Crick Institute in London.

Rupert Jeffcoat



Rupert Jeffcoat hails from Scotland where he was a chorister at St Mary’s Cathedral, Edinburgh. He was a scholar and organ scholar at St Catharine’s College, Cambridge, and also assisted regularly at both King’s and St John’s Colleges. A pupil of Peter Hurford and Peter le Huray, he gained his FRCO (as a prizewinner) less than 3 years after first approaching the bench.

After a teaching spell in Yorkshire, Rupert became Assistant Organist at St Philip’s Cathedral, Birmingham, working at the Conservatoire and with Ex Cathedra, before being sent to Coventry as Director of Music at its iconic Cathedral aged only 26. In addition to introducing repertoire from

10 centuries and in 20 languages into its liturgies, Rupert took the Cathedral choir on tours to Japan, Russia and South Africa. He was then Director of Music and Organist for over 5 years at Brisbane Cathedral, re-invigorating the music programme and ensuring the restoration of its fine organ. In that time he also gave many pre-concert talks for the Australian String Quartet and is still active as a writer, reviewer and teacher.

Rupert is well-known as an accompanist, recording as continuo-player with Emma Kirkby, broadcasting with the BBC Singers, as well as giving hundreds of recitals in the UK and abroad as a soloist. As well as his Cambridge degree, he holds a PhD in Composition, with his Third Service having been performed by Cathedral Choirs on every continent (except Antarctica!). Radio 3 judged his Messiaen *La Nativite du Seigneur* (Regent Records) ‘lively, inventive and imaginative’, while Gramophone Magazine has called him ‘truly virtuosic’. As Organist at St Luke’s Church, Chelsea, since 2011, he delights in presenting repertoire which is underplayed, unplayed or even unplayable!

Be an Angel!

Your support is vital in helping us achieve our charitable mission to share great choral music with as many people as possible.

A special message from Jeffrey Skidmore:

We believe everyone should have the opportunity to access extraordinary choral music and feel the wonderful benefits of singing, which is why we share our love of singing with as many people as possible through concerts, new commissions, recordings, training choirs for young singers, Scholarships, and community projects that reach 90,000 children and adults every year.

You may not realise that ticket sales only contribute around 20% of our income each year, with a further 10% coming from public funding. This means we need to raise over 70% of our income every year to sustain our programme of work.

As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, we are as ambitious as ever to deliver outstanding performances and participatory opportunities, but we need your help. I should be delighted and enormously grateful if you would consider supporting Ex Cathedra by becoming a valued member of our supporter programme - be an Angel and give the gift of singing today. Thank you.



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Be a Throne	from £1,500 per year.
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We would like to thank you by offering the following benefits:

- your name in concert programmes and on our website (you can opt to be anonymous)
- invitations to open rehearsals
- invitations to other special events including our Annual Dinner

It's very easy to become an Angel. Just click:

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where you can make a single or regular donation via the Charities Aid Foundation. Or you can contact Julie Watson, Grants and Giving Manager, at julie@excathedra.co.uk.

Ex Cathedra is a registered charity (no.1004086); if you are a UK taxpayer and Gift Aid your donation, every £1 you give will be worth £1.25 to us.

The rich diversity of Ex Cathedra's work would simply not be possible without the generous support of individuals such as our Angels.

Thank you.

Give the gift of singing

Becoming an Ex Cathedra Angel makes a lovely gift for someone special. We would be delighted to arrange for a personalised welcome pack to be sent to you, to offer as a present. Alternatively, we can send a pack directly on your behalf.

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