

Matthew Coleridge REQUIEM

RSVP Voices · Guy Johnston · Stephen Farr

"a valuable addition to the 21st century choral repertoire" Sir Neville Marriner

Matthew Coleridge REQUIEM

1 Introit

2 Kyrie Eleison

3 Offertory

4 Pie Jesu

5 Rex Tremendae

6 Agnus Dei

7 Lacrimosa

6:17

3.00

6:25

2:45

2:15

3:57

4:46

29:25

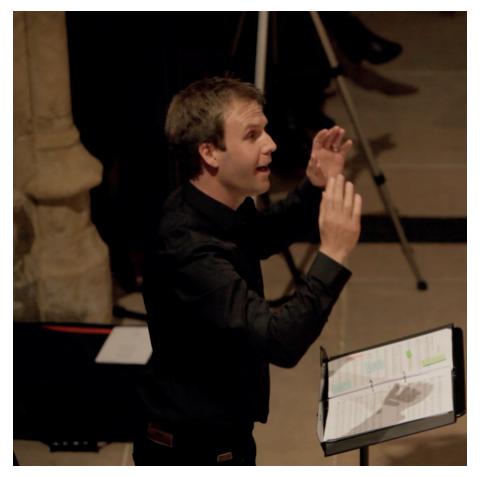
RSVP VOICES

GUY JOHNSTON cello

ROB JOHNSTON conductor

STEPHEN FARR organ

GEORGE BARTON percussion



Matthew Coleridge - REQUIEM

I didn't mean to write a Requiem. I had a few musical themes already written - the opening bars of an *Agnus Dei*, and a unison melody that might fit a *Kyrie Eleison* - but I was determined that whatever the larger work became, it wouldn't become a Requiem. After all, there's plenty of those already, and I'd struggle to add anything new to the conversation.

The more I wrote, it became frustratingly clear that I was fighting a losing battle; every time a new melody appeared, the words "et lux perpetua" or "Pie Jesu" would demand consideration, and seemed to fit my melodies too perfectly to be ignored.

I began exploring the earliest settings of the Requiem - Ockeghem, de La Rue, Richafort - and felt an immediate affinity. No harps in heaven or trumpets on the Day of Judgement, but a much more human and earthly response to the texts. This helped to shape my own interpretation, and dictated the omission of a *Dies Irae* or an *In Paradisum*.

Most of the sections I chose to set are prayers on behalf of a departed soul. The solo cello part can perhaps be seen as an embodiment of that soul, or, if you prefer, a comforting voice in response to our prayers. This is most evident in the comforting melody of the *Agnus Dei* which follows the cry for mercy of the *Rex Tremendae*.

A distinctive element of my compositional style is the close weaving of simple vocal lines into a more complex 'tapestry' of sound. This is evident in the opening bars of the INTROIT. The voices are never quite brave enough to overlap, but create fleeting dissonances as they flow closely together. The jubilant cry of 'Exaudi' was originally planned as a 'Hosannah' in a Sanctus movement which never materialised. The music gradually subsides to a hushed monastic echo of 'Requiem aeternam'.

One of the joys of setting the Requiem texts to music are the wonderful opportunities the words provide to contrast light and dark. My original intention was to balance three 'dark' and largely minor opening movements with three 'light' movements to end, using *Pie Jesu* as a central pivot. This plan went out of the window as the work progressed, but we are left with the ominous, funereal tenor drum and solemn melody of the KYRIE and the drones of the OFFERTORY, where the soprano's cold plainsong is answered by the Byzantine warmth of the cello. Here, the harmony drifts between major and minor, giving the music a dreamlike quality.

PIE JESU is a tender duet for soprano and cello, with the sustained notes of the cello adding a transcendental warmth to the organ's bare arpeggios. As the *sotto voce* choir emerges for the final bars, we feel the response to our prayer: a soft, maternal embrace.

REX TREMENDAE was the final movement I composed. Alternating between 3 and 4 time to heighten the sense of foreboding, the choir adds layer upon layer of sound as the tension increases. At the most unsettling moment of the whole work, the only response to an exclamatory 'salva me' is a gaping silence.

Acknowledgement finally comes in the gentle cello voice that opens the AGNUS DEI. These opening bars pre-date the rest of the Requiem by a couple of years - on holiday in France I woke in the middle of the night with the melody echoing around my head. It was hastily scribbled down on a sheet of loo roll with a mascara pencil.

The bleak opening chords of LACRIMOSA are reminiscent of the opening of the Introit: four interwoven upper voices above a heartbeat in the organ pedals. In the final section, the cello echoes the opening melody of the Introit, before drifting away into nothingness.



MATTHEW COLERIDGE An exciting new voice in UK choral music, Matthew's compositional voice blends elements of Medieval music, Gregorian and Eastern Orthodox chants, and shimmering modern harmonies. Melodic vocal parts are woven together to create rich tapestries of sound. His 'Corpus Christi Carol' featured on BBC Music Magazine's 2015 Christmas CD, performed by The Queen's Six. Requiem is his first major composition.

ROB JOHNSTON was a chorister at Salisbury Cathedral, before studying singing at the Royal Academy of Music. He has sung in a vast array of professional ensembles, including the Tallis Scholars, The Sixteen, The Monteverdi Choir and the Gabrieli Consort. He founded RSVP Voices in 2002, in response to demand within the music industry for a choir for film and TV soundtracks and cd recordings.

GUY JOHNSTON is one of the most exciting and versatile British cellists of today. Born into a musical family, Guy joined his brothers in the choir of King's College, Cambridge. He went on to achieve early success as winner of the BBC Young Musician of the Year in 2000. His recordings include a recital disc on Orchid Classics, and concertos by Ernest Moeran, David Matthews and Edward Gregson. Guy plays a 1714 cello by David Tecchler.

STEPHEN FARR is widely regarded as one of the finest organists of his generation. He has a particular commitment to contemporary music, and has been involved in premieres of works by composers Patrick Gowers, Francis Pott, Judith Bingham and Howard Goodall. In 2004 he commissioned a new organ symphony from David Briggs, inspired by Duruflé's setting of the Requiem mass.

RSVP VOICES - conducted by Rob Johnston

Soprano Emma Brain-Gabbott* - Alice Gribbin - Emilia Morton - Ruth Provost

Alto Joanna Bywater - Ciara Hendrick - Polly Jeffries - Katherine Nicholson

Tenor Jeremy Budd - Matthew Long - Alastair Putt - Gareth Treseder

Bass Neil Bellingham - Francis Brett* - Thomas Flint - Gavin Horsley



Produced by Adrian Peacock - Engineered, edited & mixed by Dave Rowell & Robin Hawkins

Recorded at St Paul's, Knightsbridge, Feb 1st 2016

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