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CLASSICS

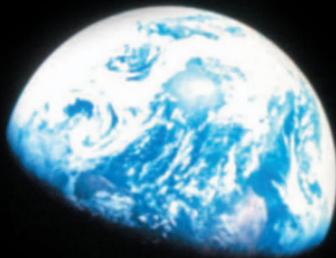
2CD SET

Ex Cathedra

Jeffrey Skidmore *conductor*

Philippe Honoré *violin*

Shared Ground



Earthrise • Hymn to Gaia • Ponticelli

Alec Roth • Vikram Seth

SHARED GROUND

music by ALEC ROTH • words (*Shared Ground*) by VIKRAM SETH

CD1

Earthrise

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1 | Part I: Man's Drive To Explore And Exploit | [7.36] |
| 2 | Part II: Contemplation Of The Earth Seen From Space | [5.47] |
| 3 | Part III: A Plea For True Wisdom And Understanding | [11.28] |

Hymn To Gaia

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|--------|
| 4 | Hymn To Gaia I (Homeric Text) | [7.28] |
| 5 | Hymn To Gaia II (Orphic Text) | [6.08] |

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|--------|
| 6 | Sol Justitiae | [4.00] |
|---|----------------------|--------|

CD1 Total Timings [42.30]

CD2

Shared Ground

- | | | |
|---|---------|--------|
| 1 | 1. Lost | [3.50] |
| 2 | 2. Oak | [4.32] |
| 3 | 3. And | [3.56] |
| 4 | 4. Host | [3.44] |

- | | | |
|---|----------|--------|
| 5 | 5. Flash | [2.43] |
| 6 | 6. This | [4.46] |

Ponticelli

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|--------|
| 7 | 1. Flat Bridge | [3.35] |
| 8 | 2. Bridge Of Sighs | [2.04] |
| 9 | 3. Arched Bridge | [5.24] |
| 10 | 4. Bridge Of Sleepers | [3.41] |
| 11 | 5. Rustic Bridge | [7.30] |

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|--------|
| 12 | The Flower | [3.13] |
|----|-------------------|--------|

CD2 Total Timings [49.00]

Total Timings [91.30]

To hear the interlocking version of *Shared Ground* and *Ponticelli*, programme the tracks in the following sequence: 1 - 7 - 2 - 8 - 3 - 9 - 4 - 10 - 5 - 11 - 6

EX CATHEDRA
JEFFREY SKIDMORE CONDUCTOR
PHILIPPE HONORÉ VIOLIN

www.signumrecords.com

INTRODUCTION

'I dodged into a record shop to escape the rain. Over the speakers came intriguingly beautiful music. I just had to know what it was, and came away with the *New World Symphonies* CD. Sometime later, considering which choir to use for a commission, I remembered Ex Cathedra. But were they as good live as on disc? I heard them in Durham Cathedral, slipping in to observe the rehearsal. The concert was wonderful, but the rehearsal was the deciding factor. Here was a group whose approach to music-making was so inspiring that I wanted to be part of it.'

Alec Roth wrote this about our performance in November 2005. In July of the following year I similarly had sneaked into a rehearsal in Lichfield Cathedral of his 2006 commission *Songs in Time of War* and had been impressed by the beauty of what I heard, his extraordinary awareness of subtle colours, textures, patterns, and delicate sonorities. And by his constant attention to detail, even at the third performance! We performed his Lullaby at 'Candlelight' in 2006 and gave our first premiere, of *Shared Ground*, in Salisbury in 2007. It was a whirlwind affair!

Ex Cathedra's relationship with Alec Roth must surely have been made in heaven. Not only has Alec absorbed the enormous scope and vision of our work, writing fluently and with apparent ease for our chamber choir, Consort, XL Anniversary Choir, and Academy of Vocal Music, as represented on this recording, but he also alludes with great awareness to many of our musical influences – Poulenc, Tallis, Latin America, and Bach. There is also the undeniable strain of Englishness which runs through his music and our performance style, regardless of our declared eclectic influences.

Ex Cathedra has performed Alec's music in over 30 concerts since 2007. We have commissioned two works, given premieres of four pieces, and have another major commission planned for 2012. Alec Roth's music is relatively simple, but strong, sturdy and passionate, written from the heart, and the choir loves it! It is of consistently high quality with moments of absolute genius. Its deceptive simplicity demands our full attention and is rewarded by close study. We also share an interest in languages, whether biblical, Latin, English, contemporary, or from the Homeric or Orphic traditions. Along with Quechua, Nahuatl, Church Slavonic, French and Latin, we can now add Ancient Greek to our list of linguistic adventures!

The relationship is sure to continue with many more performances and recordings.

Jeffrey Skidmore, July 2011

EARTHRISE

for unaccompanied choir in 40 parts

Alec Roth writes... 'Being a great admirer of Ex Cathedra, it was both a joy and an honour when Jeffrey Skidmore asked me to compose a new work for their 40th year. Casting around for a subject, I noticed that 2009 was also the 40th anniversary of the Moon landings, and of the famous picture of the Earth rising above the surface of the Moon. The Apollo 8 crew who brought back the Earthrise picture and later astronauts were awed and profoundly moved by the vision of their home planet:

"It was the most beautiful, heart-catching sight of my life, one that sent a torrent of nostalgia, of sheer homesickness surging through me ... raging nationalistic interests, famines, wars, pestilence don't show from that distance." (Frank Borman, Apollo 8);
"It was the most beautiful thing there was to see in all the heavens. People down here

don't realize what they have." (James Lovell, Apollo 8);

"It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth." (Neil Armstrong, Apollo 11).

'Reading these and other descriptions brought to mind the prophet Isaiah's evocation of a God's-eye view of the Earth. I have used these verses in the text for *Earthrise*, along with other suitably visionary selections from the Old Testament. The words have a grandness and solemnity which seem appropriate to the subject.

'If that great prophet of our own day, James Lovelock is to be believed, man's hubristic claim to dominion over the Earth has led us to the brink of environmental catastrophe. He insists (*The Revenge of Gaia*) that if we are to come to a true appreciation of the damage we are doing, then appealing to reason is not enough. We must develop an emotional connection to the Earth by harnessing the power of metaphor and myth, ancient wisdom and sacred texts, for "they serve to ignite an intuitive understanding of God and creation that cannot be falsified by rational argument." In *Homage to Gaia*, as throughout his writings, Lovelock pays tribute

to the importance of the Earthrise image: “Can there have been any more inspiring vision this century than that of the Earth from space? We saw for the first time what a gem of a planet we live on. The astronauts who saw the whole earth from Apollo 8 gave us an icon.”

'Earthrise is a meditation on this icon and falls into three sections:

Part I – Man's drive to explore and exploit

Part II – Contemplation of the Earth seen from space

Part III – A plea for true wisdom and understanding

‘The text is set in the Latin of the Vulgate, and the whole is topped and tailed by two of the Great Advent Antiphons. The music is scored for unaccompanied choir in 40 parts and its layout is modelled on that of Thomas Tallis' *Spem in alium*, dividing the 40 parts into eight choirs each of five parts: soprano, alto, tenor, baritone and bass.’

Earthrise was commissioned by Ex Cathedra with funds provided by the PRS Foundation. The first performance was given by Ex Cathedra, directed by Jeffrey Skidmore at the Town Hall, Birmingham, 31 January, 2010.

HYMN TO GAIA

for children's choir, mixed choir and bass drum

Alec Roth writes...

“Once a photograph of the Earth, taken from the outside, is available, a new idea as powerful as any in history will be let loose.” (Sir Fred Hoyle, 1948)

‘The radical new idea that sees our planet as a single living organism was already forming in James Lovelock's mind in the 1960s when he was working for NASA. It wasn't until 1969, however, that it acquired its name – at the suggestion of the writer William Golding, Lovelock's friend and neighbour in the village of Bowerchalke near Salisbury, where he was living at the time. “My reason for persisting in calling the Earth Gaia and saying that it is alive is not a personal foible; it is because I see this as an essential step in the process of public, as well as scientific, understanding. Until we all feel intuitively that the Earth is a living system, and know that we are part of it, we will fail to react automatically for its and ultimately our own protection.” (James Lovelock, *The Vanishing Face of Gaia*, 2009)

‘For the ancient Greeks, the Earth goddess Gaia was the origin of all. Her story has parallels with the creation myths of other cultures, but centres on the role of the mother rather than the father. Creator, nourisher, destroyer, she is the beginning and end of all living things. Over the centuries her influence was eclipsed as the patriarchal gods gained sway, but now we are learning again to pay heed to her old wisdom through the scientific theory and environmental movement which bear her name.

‘The first hymn is a setting of the Homeric Hymn to Gaia. The ancient Greek text is sung by the adult choir while the children sing a simultaneous translation in English. The melody sung by the children is adapted from the *Bedhaya Pangkur*, a sacred dance of the Central Javanese court gamelan tradition.

‘The second hymn is a setting of the Orphic Hymn to Gaia. In addition to the voices, the music makes use of a single instrument, the bass drum, played with a conventional beater, and on the rim with a birch. The children lead the adults in singing the ancient Greek text, and in a slightly slower central section they chant an English translation.

‘My thanks are due to Professor Paul Cartledge for his help with sources and general guidance and encouragement; to Helen Roche for her advice on the transliteration of the Greek; and to Professor James Diggle for providing a literal translation of the texts and for allowing me to record his inspirational declamation of them. Any deficiencies in the English versions are entirely my own; they are singing translations and in making them I have been influenced by the requirements of the music.’

Hymn to Gaia was commissioned by Ex Cathedra thanks to the generous support of David Heathfield and Alan Ingham.

SOL JUSTITIAE

words by James Barmby (1823-1897)

James Barmby was Principal of Hatfield Hall (now Hatfield College), University of Durham, from 1859 to 1876. The text of the Latin hymn which he wrote for use in the College Chapel was rediscovered in 2009, and is a meditation on the journey from darkness into light. It was set to music at the request of Professor Tim Burt, Master of Hatfield, by Alec Roth during his stay as Composer in Residence at the College, Easter Term 2009. The first performance was given by

the College Chapel Choir directed by Alexander Crawford at the Eve of Hatfield Day Service, Durham Cathedral, 15 June 2009.

SHARED GROUND

six pieces for double choir
words by Vikram Seth (b.1952)

PONTICELLI – partita for solo violin

Vikram Seth writes... 'I first came across George Herbert's poetry in *The Albatross Book of Verse*, a copy of which had been given to my mother in Darjeeling on her 18th birthday. I requisitioned it and took it with me to my boarding school in Dehradun, where I dipped into it from time to time. I liked Herbert's poems well enough, but was more taken at the time by his wordplay. It was some years later, when doing my English A-level at Tonbridge School that I came across him again: a selection of his poetry was one of our set texts. I felt a great affinity for Herbert – for his clarity, his depth of feeling, his spiritual struggles, his delight in the pleasures of nature and music, his wit, his strange juxtapositions, his decorous colloquiality. Indeed, though I am neither Christian nor particularly religious, he is still among my favourite poets.

'When, more than three decades later, I heard that his house near Salisbury was on sale, I felt I had to visit it. I had no intention of buying it; I simply wanted to see the place where such poems as "Love" and "Virtue" had been written. I saw the house, felt its atmosphere, and – though I could not really afford to – made a bid for it. It struck me that had the house belonged to Donne or Milton or some other more overtly forceful personality, I would not have been able to live there. But Herbert, for all his depth and richness, is a clear writer and a tactful spirit. He might influence me but would not wish to wrest me from myself.

'I bought the house in 2003. The garden runs down to the river Nadder, and the wood and water-meadows beyond form part of the grounds. At the beginning I felt his presence hourly, both within the house and outside. As time passed, I began to think of it as being somewhat more my own, but still, indefinitely, shared.

'Early in 2007, while I was in Delhi but thinking of Salisbury, I wrote the six poems of *Shared Ground*. Though the mood and spirit of these verses are my own, they are formally modelled on poems by Herbert: "Lost" on "Paradise"; "Oak" on "Easter-Wings"; "And" on "Hope"; "Host"

on "Love III"; "Flash" on "Virtue" and "This" on "Prayer I" – some of the loveliest of his poems, and among my favourites.

'The texts were set to music by Alec Roth while he was staying at the house during my absence in Delhi. The spirit of the place found its way into the music too, and in addition to setting the words for double choir, the composer wrote a set of dance-like pieces for solo violin, each inspired by one of the five bridges in the grounds. The two works, *Shared Ground* and *Ponticelli* ("little bridges"), are designed so that they can be performed separately or together. In the combined form, the six pieces of *Shared Ground* are linked by the five bridges of *Ponticelli*.'

Shared Ground and *Ponticelli* were commissioned jointly by the Salisbury, Chelsea and Lichfield Festivals with funds provided by Arts Council England and the PRS Foundation. The first performances were given by Ex Cathedra conducted by Jeffrey Skidmore, and Philippe Honoré (violin) at Wilton Church, 6 June; Holy Trinity Church, Chelsea, 21 June; and Lichfield Cathedral, 10 July, 2007.

THE FLOWER

words by George Herbert (1593-1633)

Alec Roth writes... 'Early in 2007 I set four stanzas of George Herbert's poem "The Flower" at the suggestion of Judy Rees, who had invited a number of composers to contribute new hymn-tune settings of Herbert's poetry, to be published by the George Herbert in Bemerton Group (www.georgeherbert.org.uk) in association with the RSCM. I made further use of the melody in the second movement of *Ponticelli*, which I was working on at the time. The slightly more elaborate version recorded here was arranged especially for Ex Cathedra.'

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

EARTHRISE

for unaccompanied choir in 40 parts

Tenor: Samuel Boden

Antiphon

O oriens, splendor lucis aeternae et sol iustitiae:
veni et illumina sedentes in tenebris et umbra
mortis.

Great Advent Antiphon 5

Part I - man's drive to explore and exploit

Quid est homo quod memor es eius? Aut filius
hominis quoniam visitas eum?

Constituisti eum super opera manuum tuarum;
omnia subiecisti sub pedibus eius.

Psalms 7(8): 4, 6

Ad silicem extendit manum suam; subvertit a
radicibus montes.

In petris rivos excidit; et omne pretiosum vidit
oculus eius.

Profunda quoque fluviorum scrutatus est; et
abscondita produxit in lucem.

Sapientia vero ubi invenitur? Et quis est locus
intellegentiae?

Job 28: 9-12

*O you who rise, brightness of light everlasting
and sun of justice: come and illumine those
who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.*

*What is man that you are mindful of him? Or the
son of man that you visit him?*

*You have set him in dominion over the works of your
hands; all things you have subjected under his feet.*

*To the hard rock he stretches out his hand; he
overturns the mountains by their roots.*

*In the rocks he cuts out channels; and every
precious thing is sought out by his eye.*

*The deeps of the rivers he also searches; and
hidden things he brings to light.*

*But where shall wisdom truly be found? And where
is the place of discernment?*

Part II – contemplation of the Earth seen from space

Ecce O ecce

Levate in excelsum oculos vestros et videte; quis
creavit haec?

Quis mensus est pugillo aquas? Et caelos palmo
ponderavit? Quis adpendit tribus digitis molem
terrae?

Qui sedet super gyrum terrae; et habitatores eius
sunt quasi locustae. Qui extendit velut nihilum
caelos; et expandit eos sicut tabernaculum ad
inhabitandum.

Qui dat secretorum scrutatores quasi non sint;
iudices terrae velut inane fecit.

Ecce gentes quasi stilla situlae. Ecce insulae
quasi pulvis exiguus.

Isaiah 40: 26, 12, 22, 23, 15

Part III – a plea for true wisdom and understanding

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.

Psalms 48(49): 1-3

Dominus sapientia fundavit terram; stabilivit
caelos prudentia.

Look, O look!

*Lift up your eyes on high and see; who created
these things?*

*Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his
hand? And weighed the heavens with his palm?
Who has balanced on three fingers the mass of the
earth?*

*He that sits above the circle of the earth; and
its inhabitants are like locusts. He that stretches
out the heavens as nothingness; and spreads
them out like a tent to live in.*

*He that makes the searchers of secrets as nothing;
the judges of the earth he renders worthless.*

*Look, the nations are like a drop from a bucket.
Look, the islands are like fine dust.*

*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.*

Sapientia illius eruperunt abyssi, et nubes rorē concrescunt.

Fili mi, ne effluent 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.

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.

Proverbs 3: 19-23; 13-18

Antiphon

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

Great Advent Antiphon 1

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.

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.

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.

HYMN TO GAIA

for children's choir, mixed choir and bass drum

4 Hymn to Gaia I

Ancient Greek Homeric Hymn to Gaia

Soprano: Grace Davidson

Mezzo soprano: Martha McLorinan

To Gaia, mother of all, shall I sing:

The oldest one, firm foundation of all the world.

All things that move over the face of the earth,

All things that move through the sea, and all that fly:

All these are fed and nourished from your store;

From you all children and all good harvests come forth,

O blessed one, our mother earth.

O blessed one, mother of all mankind,

The giver of life and the taker of life away,

For mortal men, happy are those you honour:

Your fertile earth yields up riches to satisfy all their needs;

Their cities and their homes are filled with all good things;

Well-ordered lives of men and women you bless:

Good fortune is theirs.

Their children sing for joy and delight,

Exulting in their youth, they dance through the flowers;

And over the grass they dance for joy.

It is you who bless, it is you who nourish,
Sacred spirit, mother earth.

Be well, be well, mother earth,

Lovely bride of starry heaven, of starry heaven;

And for my song grant me life both full and long.

It is you who bless, it is you who nourish,
Sacred spirit, mother earth, our blessed
mother earth.

5 Hymn to Gaia II

Ancient Greek Orphic Hymn to Gaia

Soprano: Susannah Vango

Mother earth, source of blessed gods and men,
All-nourisher, all-giver, ripener, all-destroyer,
Inspirer of growth, yielder of beautiful fruit in due season,

Foundation of the endless cosmos,
many-splendoured lady,

With the pains of child-birth you bring forth
all manner of life,

Eternal, highly-revered, deep-bosomed, blessed one,
Rejoicing in sweetly-breathing greenery,

many-flowered deity,
Delighting in rain; around you heaven's

teeming stars
Revolve in ever-winding flow most awesome.
But, blessed spirit, may your fruits increase,
and with joyful heart,
Look kindly upon us this time and for ever.

English translations © Alec Roth 2011

6 SOL JUSTITIAE

words by James Barmby (1823-1897)
Soprano: Katie Trethewey

1. Jam noctis adsunt tenebrae;
Te autem expectantibus,
In cujus pennis sanitas,
Orire Sol justitiae

4. Tu, vera lux in tenebris
Lassatis et errantibus,
Jam Te desiderantibus
Affulge per caliginem.

5. Sic, in eremo sospites,
Tuo muniti numine,
Te noctis in silentio,
Te consequemur in dies.

6. Nox tandem cedat lumini
Illustraturo condita,

1. *As the darkness of night arrives
You, for whom we wait,
In whose wings is healing,
Arise, sun of righteousness.*

4. *You, true light in darkness,
Upon the weary and the wandering,
Now, upon those who long for you,
Beam out through the gloom.*

5. *So, in the desert, safe and sound,
Protected by your power,
You, in the night and in silence,
You we will follow into the day.*

6. *Night at last will give way to the light
Which will illumine that which is hidden,*

Et lotis Agni sanguine,
Lucent lux perpetua.

7. Deo Patri sit gloria,
Ejusque soli Filio,
Cum Spiritu Paraclito,
Et nunc et in perpetuum. Amen.

*And those washed in the Lamb's blood,
Shine upon them light everlasting.*

7. *To God the Father be glory
And to his only Son
With the Holy Ghost
Both now and for ever. Amen.*

SHARED GROUND

six pieces for double choir
words by Vikram Seth (b.1952)

1 1. Lost

Lost in a world of dust and spray,
We turn, we learn, we twist, we pray
For word or tune or touch or ray:

Some tune of hope, some word of grace,
Some ray of joy to guide our race,
Some touch of love to deuce our ace.

In vain the ace seeks out its twin.
The race is long, too short to win.
The tune is out, the word not in.

Our limbs, our hearts turn all to stone.
Our spring, our step lose aim and tone.
We are no more – and less than one.

There is no soul in which to blend,
No life to leave, no light to lend,
No shape, no chance, no drift, no end.

2 2. Oak

Last night a storm raged round the bare oak tree.

A cold, sharp rain fell; wild in pace
The ice-fed air swirled free.

Now in this place

I see

No trace

Of wind or lee,

No grass, no earth – the space
Is a clear lake, deep as my knee.

I reach its edge and view, far down, my face.

I wade out to the bench, set down my wine,
My bread and cheese, and like some sage
Of old, sit down to dine.

I do not rage

Or pine

At age,

For youth once mine.

This pool, this plate, this page,
This tree whose roots are branch and tine
Holds me in its still hour-glass, its free cage.

3 3. And

And then I woke. I tried, once more, to sleep,
But could not coax or keep
The thought of you, your laugh, your hands,
your eyes,

Blanked by the sun's calm rise.
The dream was done; your voice was gone; the day
That rose now, pink and grey,
Was there to work through, till the dark hours came,
And you, your voice, your name.

4 4. Host

Tenor: Samuel Boden

I heard it was for sale and thought I'd go
To see the old house where
He lived three years, and died. How could I know
Its stones, its trees, its air,
The stream, the small church, the dark rain
would say:

"You've come; you've seen; now stay."

"A guest?" I asked. "Yes, as you are on earth."
"The means?" ". . . will come, don't fear."
"What of the risk?" "Our lives are that from birth."
"His ghost?" "His soul is here."
"He'll change my style." "Well, but you could
do worse

Than rent his rooms of verse."

Joy came, and grief; love came, and loss;
three years –

Tiles down; moles up; drought; flood.
Though far in time and faith, I share his tears,
His hearth, his ground, his mud;
Yet my host stands just out of mind and sight,
That I may sit and write.

4a. [Inscription]* (George Herbert)

If thou chance for to find
A new house to thy mind
And built without thy cost
Be good to the poor
As God gives thee store
And then my labour's not lost.

* This inscription carved in stone is set into the north wall of the Old Rectory, Bemerton, which was George Herbert's home from 1630 to his death in 1633 and where he wrote much of his poetry.

5 5. Flash

Bright bird, whose swift blue wings gleam out
As on the stream you dip and rise,
You, as you scan for parr and trout,
Flash past my eyes.

Bright trout, who glints in fin and scale,
Whose whim is grubs, whose dream is flies,
You, with one whisk of your quick tail,
Flick past my eyes.

Bright stream, home to bright fish and birds,
A gold glow as the gold sun dies,
You too, too fast for these poor words,
Flow past my eyes.

But such drab words, ah, sad to say,
When all that's bright has fled and gone,
Praised by dull folk, dressed all in grey,
Live on and on.

6 6. This

Hearts-ease, hearts-bane; a balm that chafes
one raw;
The soul in splints; graph with no grid or gauge;
A fort, a house on stilts, a hut of straw;
A tic, a weal, the flu, the plague, the rage;
Bug swept in through the net; moth with a sting;
Two planes in fog jammed blind; a mailed
kid glove;
A dance on coals that makes us yelp and sing;
A rook or roc or swan or goose or dove.

label. The second, a pair of works – *Shared Ground* for unaccompanied choir and *Ponticelli* for solo violin – was premiered in 2007 and marked the beginning of his ongoing fruitful relationship with Ex Cathedra and Jeffrey Skidmore. The third, *The Traveller*, a 50-minute oratorio on the theme of the Ages of Man for violin, tenor, choir, children's choir and orchestra received its first performance in Salisbury Cathedral in May 2008. The series was completed with *Seven Elements* for tenor and piano, and *Seven Elements Suite* for violin and piano in 2009.

This new recording of *Shared Ground* and *Ponticelli* coincides with the publication by Penguin of Vikram Seth's book *The Rivered Earth*, which tells the story of their four-year collaboration.

EX CATHEDRA

From its home city of Birmingham, Ex Cathedra has established an international reputation as a leading UK choir and Early Music ensemble. It aims to explore, research and commission the finest choral music and to set the highest standards for excellence in performance and training. Ex Cathedra is known for its passion for seeking out the best, the unfamiliar and the unexpected in the choral repertoire, for its thorough research and for its dynamic performances.

Founded by Jeffrey Skidmore in 1969, Ex Cathedra has grown into a unique musical resource, comprising specialist choir, vocal Consort, period-instrument orchestra and thriving education programme.

Ex Cathedra presents a series of concerts in Birmingham, where it is an Associate Artist at Town Hall, and is delighted to receive invitations to appear at festivals and concert series across the UK and abroad. Recent performances have included the Aldeburgh, Aranjuez, Canterbury, Chelsea, Chichester, Edinburgh International, Gregynog, Kilkenny, Lufthansa, Newbury Spring, Paisley, Santiago de Compostela, Salisbury, Stratford, St David's and Three Choirs festivals.



© James Ashby

The group has appeared in Champagne, Poissy, New York, Sagra Musicale Umbra (Perugia) and at the Royal Opera House.

Its education programme is central to Ex Cathedra's mission. It has delivered its *Singing Playgrounds* project to over 180 schools across the UK, and to schools in Bangkok and New Zealand. There are plans to deliver *Singing Playgrounds* training in Guangzhou and Hong

Kong in 2012. *Singing Medicine* has been delivered for over five years at Birmingham Children's Hospital, and recently started at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital. The group runs its own youth training choir, the Academy of Vocal Music (male and female singers aged 16 and above) and the Junior Academy of Vocal Music (boys and girls aged 7-16), trained by Rebecca Ledgard.

Discover more at www.excathedra.co.uk and www.facebook.com/excathedra.

Soprano: Susan Bates*, Naomi Berry, Alison Burnett, Grace Davidson, Elizabeth Drury*, Bridget Kerrison, Joy Krishnamoorthy, Margaret Langford, Claire Lees*, Alison Perrier-Burgess, Helena Raeburn, Amy Secretan*, Shirley Scott*, Rachel Snape*, Katie Trethewey, Susannah Vango.

Alto: Derek Acock, David Allsopp*, Rebecca Buswell, Patrick Dunachie*, Sarah Budd, Amanda Cowan*, Claire Eadington, Olivia Maffett, Amy Maclean, Martha McLorinan, Matthew Reeve, Jill Robinson, Janet Skidmore, Kate Thatcher*, Matthew Venner, Urszula Weber†.

Tenor: James Atherton, Samuel Boden, Jeremy Budd†, Jim Clements†, Jim Clulee, Stephen Davis*, Julian Forbes*, Tim Kennedy, Peter Trethewey, Ashley Turnell*, Michael Solomon Williams*.

Baritone: William Coleman*, Simon Gallear*, Richard Green, Paul Hedley*, Adrian Horsewood, Greg Skidmore, David Stuart, Andrew van der Beek*, Robert Webb*.

Bass: Martin Bates*, Robert Clarke*, John Cotterill, John Evanson, William Gaunt*, Jonathan Gibbs, Themba Mvula, Nicholas Perfect, William Robinson, Jeff Sutherland-Kay.

*denotes *Earthrise* only

†denotes *Shared Ground & Hymn to Gaia* only

Academies of Vocal Music (*Hymn to Gaia* only): Henry Apsey, Natasha Branson, Connor Burns, Joseph Burns, Fransizka Clifford, Wendy Cooper, Emma Coleman, Martha Davis, Lukas Evans, Lucia Evans, Sam Evans, Sarra Facey, Megan Forster, Tom Heath, Saffron King, Georgina O' Hare, Antoni Pitsillides, Lucia Pitsillides, Sarah Price, Laura Rakotonirina, Oscar Richardson, Isabel Russell, Alice Shackley, Scarlett Taylor, Joanna Van Zeller, Ruth Wu.

Vocal Tutors (*Hymn to Gaia* only): Marianne Ayling, Claire Hollocks, Rachael Richardson, Jill Robinson, Janet Skidmore, Urszula Weber.

Bass Drum (*Hymn to Gaia*): Simone Rebello.

JEFFREY SKIDMORE

Jeffrey Skidmore is one of the country's foremost choral conductors and is highly regarded by instrumentalists, singers and audiences for the high quality of his performances. He is well known for exciting programming which is often challenging but always accessible. Jeffrey read music at Magdalen College, Oxford, before returning to his native Birmingham to develop Ex Cathedra into the internationally-acclaimed choral group it has become today.

Directing Ex Cathedra and its associated Baroque Orchestra and Consort, Jeffrey has appeared in concert series and festivals across the UK and abroad and made more than a dozen highly-acclaimed recordings. He regularly conducts other ensembles and in the last five years has commissioned more than ten new works and conducted many world premieres by both well-established composers and new, young talent. Composers include Fyfe Hutchins, Gabriel Jackson, John Joubert, Daryl Runswick, Peter Sculthorpe, Philip Sheppard, Peter Wiegold, and Roderick Williams.

Jeffrey is a pioneer in the field of research and performance of neglected choral works of



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the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, and has won wide acclaim in particular for his recordings of French and Latin American Baroque music with Ex Cathedra. An Honorary Fellow at Birmingham Conservatoire and a Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, he has prepared new performing editions of works by Araujo, Charpentier, Lalande, Monteverdi and Rameau. www.excathedra.co.uk/jeffrey_skidmore.php

PHILIPPE HONORÉ

Philippe Honoré divides his busy schedule between solo work, chamber music and as a principal player with the Philharmonia Orchestra. After having received top honours from both the Paris Conservatoire and the Royal Academy of Music in London, he was made Lauréat of the Yehudi Menuhin Foundation of France in 1992 and was awarded an Honorary Associateship by the Royal Academy of Music in 2001.

He is a former member of the Vellinger Quartet and a founder member of the Mobius ensemble. As such, he has appeared in some of the most prestigious venues abroad (such as Amsterdam's Concertgebouw) and in the UK (such as the Wigmore Hall and the South Bank). He has appeared as a soloist performing Beethoven, Mozart, Bach and Vivaldi concerti, as well as Ravel's *Tzigane*.

Philippe regularly appears as guest leader with some of the UK's best orchestras.

He has made numerous solo and chamber music recordings. His solo violin performances on Decca's album *An Equal Music* are regularly featured on both Classic FM and Radio 3. The



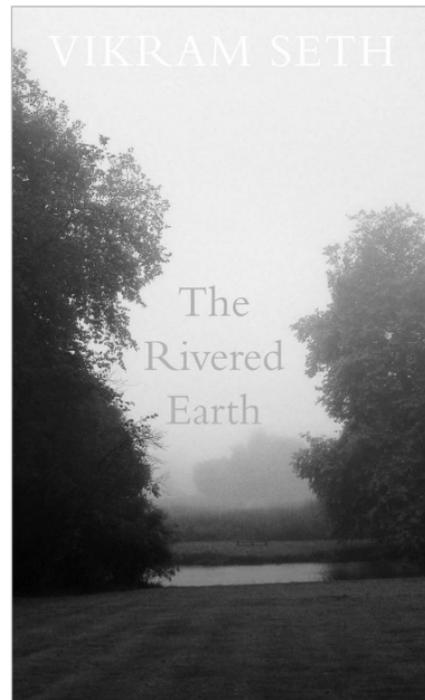
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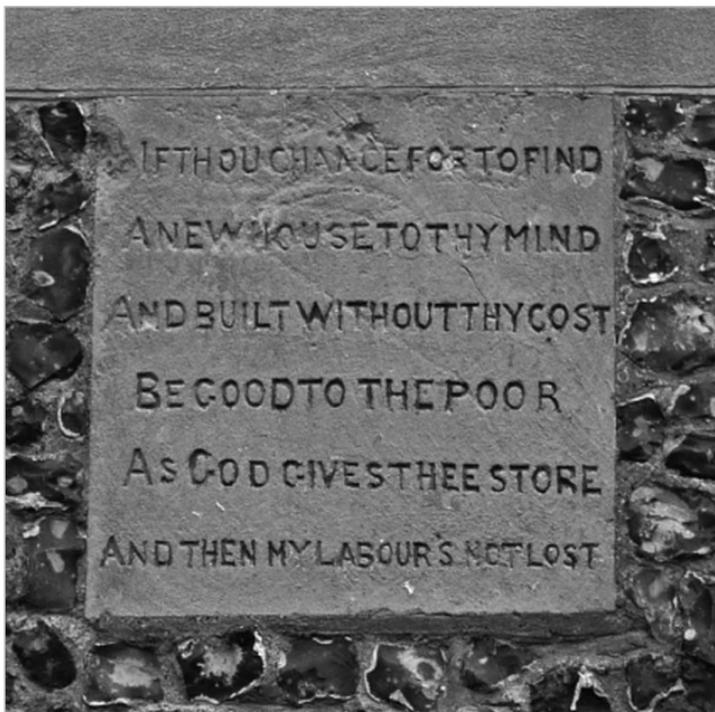
novel of that name by the author Vikram Seth was inspired by and dedicated to Philippe.

Philippe's collaboration with the composer Alec Roth over a recent four-year project has earned him great critical acclaim. The performances took place at the Salisbury, Chelsea and Lichfield Festivals. BBC Radio 3 recorded and broadcast these annual concerts, in which, in addition to the world premieres of Roth's work, Philippe also played solo Bach and Ysaÿe sonatas. The Times described his account of Roth's solo work in 2007 as 'magically played'.

His violin is an Eberle, made in 1786 in Naples.

Shared Ground is the second of four libretti written by Vikram Seth to be set to music by Alec Roth, all of which can be found in *The Rivered Earth* (published by Penguin, November 2011). The book also contains an account by the author of "the pleasures and pains of working with a composer".





George Herbert's inscription, the Old Rectory, Bemerton
(see *Shared Ground* text, No. 4a)
[photo credit: James Woods]

Ex Cathedra is supported by Birmingham City Council and Arts Council England.

Recorded at Hawkesyard Priory on 29 - 30 June and 1 July 2011.

Recording Producer - Mark Brown
Recording Engineer - Julian Millard

Cover Image - NASA (Earthrise from Apollo 8)
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