

Requiem for Humanity - About

Requiem for Humanity is a multi-faith choral mass with an underlying message of hope and unity. It is inspired by the belief that all of humanity has something in common and explores the themes of life and death and the many views people hold. The 40-minute work is scored for SATB choir with soprano, alto, and baritone soloists, and can be accompanied by piano, organ, or string quintet/orchestra and piano.

With eleven movements, parts of the Latin mass are set alongside texts from Buddhism, Judaism, Daoism and Hinduism. It also incorporates poems from Auden and Yeats and quotes from inspirational leaders such as Gandhi. Stylistically it combines influences from classical, folk, world music as well as film music.

1. 'Requiem (Introit) & Kyrie' (*Grant them eternal rest, O Lord*)
2. 'Dies Irae' (*Day of Wrath! Day of Mourning!*)
3. 'Contemplation' - text by The Buddha, Anguttara Nikaya
4. 'Funeral Blues' – W. H. Auden
5. 'May God Remember' – text from Jewish Memorial Service
6. 'Sanctus' (*Holy Lord, Hosanna*)
7. 'Everlasting Voices' – Yeats
8. 'Faith' – based on quotes from Mahatma Gandhi
9. 'Agnus Dei' (*Lamb of God, grant them rest*)
10. 'Lux Aeterna' (communion) (*Everlasting light, mercy*)
11. 'Death is not an End' - Daoism, *Zhuangzi*, 24

Personal Note

I composed the most of my Requiem during my pregnancy and in the first year after my daughter Millie was born. This beauty of life resonated with me whilst writing, and even though I was struggling with sleep or facing the challenges of a new baby who barely slept, I grabbed the spaces to compose and channel my energy and emotions. I always thought I needed lots of time to compose, but these 10 minute bursts worked really well and allowed me to come back with a fresh mind to re-evaluate what I had previously written. During this period I lost two of my grandparents and had the premiere in Holland, where I sang. I found much support in the final track Death is not an End. The recording, by chance, happened on the day my son was born which seemed to complete this beautiful cycle of life and death.

Performances & Album

It was premiered in the Netherlands by Dutch chamber choir La Colombe on 25th October 2014 and they later recorded the Requiem and gave their CD presentation on 7th November 2015 in the Oude Blasius Kerk, Delden, NL. The German premiere on 14th November 2015 was the day after the Isis attacks in Paris and was deeply moving with a minute of silence before the performance.

The Purbeck Arts choir did a very successful UK premiere on 1st April 2017 in St. Mary's Church, Swanage. It was the first performance with string quintet and piano accompaniment in place of organ. In 2024 it was beautifully performed at Wells Cathedral with Millfield School Choir with full string orchestra and piano.

Broadcast Recognition:

Supported by **BBC Radio 3**, which aired movements such as *Lux Aeterna* and *Faith*, and featured "May God Remember" on **BBC Introducing in the West**

"Helen Ostafew's Requiem for Humanity is a beautifully haunting piece of music that has had a very positive response from listeners of both Radio 3 Breakfast and In Tune"

BBC Radio 3 Producer Martin Webb - 2019