

Wind, Earth, Iron, Water, Stone
for SSAATB Choir

Alex Groves

for Rosie, Joanna & Richard

Wind, Earth, Iron, Water, Stone

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Instrumentation

SSAATB Choir
with SAT soloists or semichorus

Duration

5'

Notes

Wind, Earth, Iron, Water, Stone was commissioned for the Handel & Hendrix Christmas Showcase - a concert which consists mostly of Baroque repertoire and congregational carols. I wanted to create a piece that could sit within this context, enhancing the audience experience whilst also offering something new.

To do this, I looked to one of my favourite carols - Holst's *In the Bleak Midwinter* and, most importantly, Christina Rossetti's text on which it is based. When working with text, I like to peel back the layers, stripping away the less important words and filling the space left behind with music. This process also allows me opportunity to open up the meaning of the text and make it slightly more inclusive.

As an atheist, music at Christmas is a slightly strange affair - most of our best-loved carols revolve (rightly so) around the nativity, Jesus Christ and God. I've always felt slightly strange engaging with carols culturally without necessarily feeling a kinship with the words I'm singing. By stripping back the text, I hoped to create a piece that can resonate with everyone regardless of their beliefs. It contains enough of the original to convey its meaning - a stark and austere world brought to life by the warmth of human kindness - whilst leaving enough ambiguity for everyone to draw their own conclusions.

A couple of notes on performance:

- Sections marked as soloists may be performed by a single voice or a semichorus depending on the size of the ensemble performing.
- The solo parts include sections of repeated text. These are indicated in the lyrics like this: 'snow, snow, snow...'. The repeated word should continue to sung to the rhythms indicated until new text is given.

Wind, Earth, Iron, Water, Stone was commissioned by Handel & Hendrix in London as part of my time as their Composer-in-Residence. It was originally written for Baroque Flute, Mezzo-Soprano and Tenor, and premièred by Rosie Bowker, Joanna Harries and Richard Robbins on 18th December 2018. This arrangement for SSATB choir was created in April 2020.

Wind, Earth, Iron, Water, Stone

adapted by Alex Groves
from *In the Bleak Midwinter* by Christina Rossetti

Wind
Earth
Iron
Water
Stone

Snow on snow
Snow on snow
Snow on snow
Snow on snow

Winter
Night
Day

Snow on snow
Snow on snow
Snow on snow
Snow on snow

Snow on snow
Snow on snow
Snow on snow
Snow on snow

My bliss
My kiss
My heart
My part

for Rosie, Joanna & Richard

Wind, Earth, Iron, Water, Stone

for SSAATB Choir

Alex Groves
after Christina Rossetti

Alex Groves

Slow, meditative and austere (c. ♩ = 50)

pp

Soprano

Wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

Alto

Wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

Tenor

Wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

Bass

Wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

Piano (for rehearsal only)

pp

6

p

S.

wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

A.

wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

T.

wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

B.

wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

Pno.

p

11 *mp*

S. wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

A. wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

T. wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

B. wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

Pno. *mp*

16 *mf*

S. wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

A. wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

T. wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

B. wind, earth, i - ron, wa - ter, stone,

Pno. *mf*

B Slow, meditative and austere again (c. ♩ = 50)

35

p *mp*

S. Win - ter, _____ night, _____ day, _____ win - ter, _____

A. Win - ter, _____ night, _____ day, _____ win - ter, _____

T. Win - ter, _____ night, _____ day, _____ win - ter, _____

B. Win - ter, _____ night, _____ day, _____ win - ter, _____

Pno. *p* *mp*



39

mf

S. night, _____ day, win - ter, night, day,

A. night, _____ day, win - ter, night, day,

T. night, _____ day, win - ter, night, day,

B. night, _____ day, win - ter, night, day,

Pno. *mf*

61

S. Solo

mf

3 snow, snow, snow... snow on snow, snow, snow, snow... 3 snow on snow,

(singers drop out one by one until only one person is left)
dim.

bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart, my

S.

(singers drop out one by one until only one person is left)
dim.

my bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart,

A. Solo

mf

3 snow, snow, snow... snow on snow, snow, snow, snow... 3 snow on snow,

(singers drop out one by one until only one person is left)
dim.

bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart, my

A.

(singers drop out one by one until only one person is left)
dim.

my bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart,

T. Solo

mf

snow, snow, snow, snow, snow on snow, snow, snow, snow, snow, snow on snow,

(singers drop out one by one until only one person is left)
dim.

bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart, my

T.

(singers drop out one by one until only one person is left)
dim.

B.

bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart, my

Pno.

mf

molto rit.

S. Solo

65 *mp* *p*

snow, snow, snow... ³ snow on snow, snow, snow, snow... ³ snow on snow,

S.

p (solo)

bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart.

— my bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart.

A. Solo

mp *p*

snow, snow, snow... ³ snow on snow, snow, snow, snow... ³ snow on snow,

A.

p (solo)

bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart,

my bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart,

T. Solo

mp *p*

snow, snow, snow, snow, snow on snow, snow, snow, snow, snow, snow on snow,

T.

p (solo)

bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart,

B.

p (solo)

bliss, my kiss, my part, my heart,

molto rit.

Pno.

mp *p*