

WHY THIS TE DEUM?

In an age where we believe that mankind is all, and controls all, but are confronted by the weight of the failure of our management of the earth's resources, global conflict, poverty and migration, the two words, You God, come like a respite, a pause, a glitch in our systems analysis.

The Te Deum is a beautiful and powerful 4th Century prayer combining praise of our Creator God with recognition of our human frailty. The listener is placed before an impassioned reminder of the attributes and workings of God, but rather than culminating in a blaze of certainty, the Te Deum ends with an acknowledgement of the fragile nature of our trust: you, God, are our hope, don't let us down.

Nobody writes in a vacuum. It's not hard to see how a bilingual composer - an Englishman living in Paris - equally passionate for classical and contemporary music, appreciating the diversity of modern and historic expressions of faith, would write a work of this kind.

The Te Deum is scored for three vocal ensembles: a classical Latin choir, an English gospel choir and a quartet of French soloists. The composition evokes a respect for our common musical heritage, combined with a desire to explore contrasting contemporary styles, this time with a hint of jazz, bringing together our distant history and our present reality.

Saddened by the global trend of mounting nationalist sentiment, faced with the impossibility of integrating the countless languages of the world into one work, I hope that the accumulation of English, French and Latin can at least begin to suggest a foretaste of heaven, the meeting of believers in glory.

There are those who bow to tradition to the exclusion of contemporary expressions of worship, others who militate for breaking free from the shackles of the past. My personal stance would be one of attempting reconciliation, acknowledging on the one hand our debt to our roots – in faith and music – while on the other, moving on, building creatively on that heritage.

John Featherstone

This will need editing by John mainly because too long, idem for French version