

# Alec Roth – HYMN TO GAIA – words from the Ancient Greek

for children's choir, mixed choir and bass drum

commissioned by Ex Cathedra

first performed by Ex Cathedra, with the Ex Cathedra Academy and Junior Academy, conducted by Jeffrey Skidmore, Birmingham Town Hall, 20 November 2011

*"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.

*Hymn to Gaia* consists of three parts, each of which may be performed separately:

**PROCESSIONAL:** As a prologue, the children enter in procession singing an invocation to Gaia. The ancient Greek text is taken from *The Libation Bearers* by Aeschylus.

**HYMN TO GAIA I:** 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.

**HYMN TO GAIA II:** 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.

## DURATION

Total: ca. 16 minutes (Processional: ca. 2½ [variable]; Hymn to Gaia I: ca. 7½; Hymn to Gaia II: ca. 6)

## FORCES REQUIRED

*Hymn to Gaia* is scored for Children's Choir, Adult Mixed Choir (SATB) and Bass Drum.

## PERFORMANCE MATERIALS

In addition to the Full Score (used by the Choir), the following materials are available:

Bass Drum Part

Keyboard Reduction (to facilitate rehearsing the children's choir)

Children's Chorus Part (single melody line) to facilitate learning

(Ideally, the children should perform from memory)

## SCORE SAMPLE

Click here for sample pages of the score: [Hymn to Gaia I](#); [Hymn to Gaia II](#)

## TEXT

Click here to see the [full text](#) of *Hymn to Gaia*, with a parallel English translation.

## RECORDING

*Hymn to Gaia* is recorded by Ex Cathedra on the CD "Shared Ground" on the Signum label ([SIGCD270](#)). Individual tracks may be sampled and downloaded at [iTunes](#).