

Alec Roth – SEVEN ELEMENTS – words by Vikram Seth

for tenor and piano, or string quartet

commissioned jointly by the Salisbury, Chelsea and Lichfield Festivals

first performed by James Gilchrist (tenor) with Rustem Hayroudinoff (piano) at Wilton Church, 1 June; St Luke's Church, Chelsea, 16 June; and Lichfield Cathedral, 15 July, 2006

version for tenor and string quartet first performed by James Gilchrist with the Allegri String Quartet, St Myllin's Church, Llanfyllin, 2 July 2010.

1. Earth
2. Air
3. Wood
4. Fire
5. Metal
6. Water
7. Space

In the classical Indian tradition, the four European elements – earth, air, fire and water – are supplemented by a fifth: space or ether. The ancient Chinese elements are also five: water, fire, earth, metal and wood. In his poems, Vikram Seth has combined these three traditions to produce a grand total of seven elements.

DURATION

ca. 25 minutes

Individual songs or selections may be performed separately

FORCES REQUIRED

Version 1: Tenor and Piano

Version 2: Tenor and String Quartet

PERFORMANCE MATERIALS

Vocal Score (voice and piano)

Full Score and set of Parts for the Quartet version

SCORE SAMPLES

Click here for sample pages of the [Vocal Score](#)

REVIEWS

The climax of *Confluences*, an epic four-year creation from writer Vikram Seth and composer Alec Roth, received its London premiere at the Chelsea Arts Festival last night . . . Roth's grateful, mellifluous settings of Seth's resonant texts were exquisitely delivered by James Gilchrist.

LONDON EVENING STANDARD (Barry Millington) 17.06.09 * * * *

Seven Elements is a mystic work that aspires to provide a coherent vision of a unified cosmos by examining its constituent parts and forging from them a sense of totality . . . The song cycle deals with how each element impinges on human experience. Fire has Gilchrist gasping through a riotous celebration of heat as the driving force of existence.

THE GUARDIAN (Tim Ashley) 23 June 2009 * * * *

Its seven songs take the elements as an imaginative starting-point in a manner oddly reminiscent of *The Planets*: seven metaphysical tone poems, with a chilly final dissolve into Space. There was even an uproarious scherzo, *Fire*, delivered by Gilchrist and Hayroudinoff with the verve and commitment that characterised their entire performance of the cycle.

BIRMINGHAM POST (Richard Bratby) 17 July 2009 * * * *

ASSOCIATED WORKS

Seven Elements Suite for Violin and Piano

The Hermit on the Ice for Tenor, Violin and Piano, words by Vikram Seth