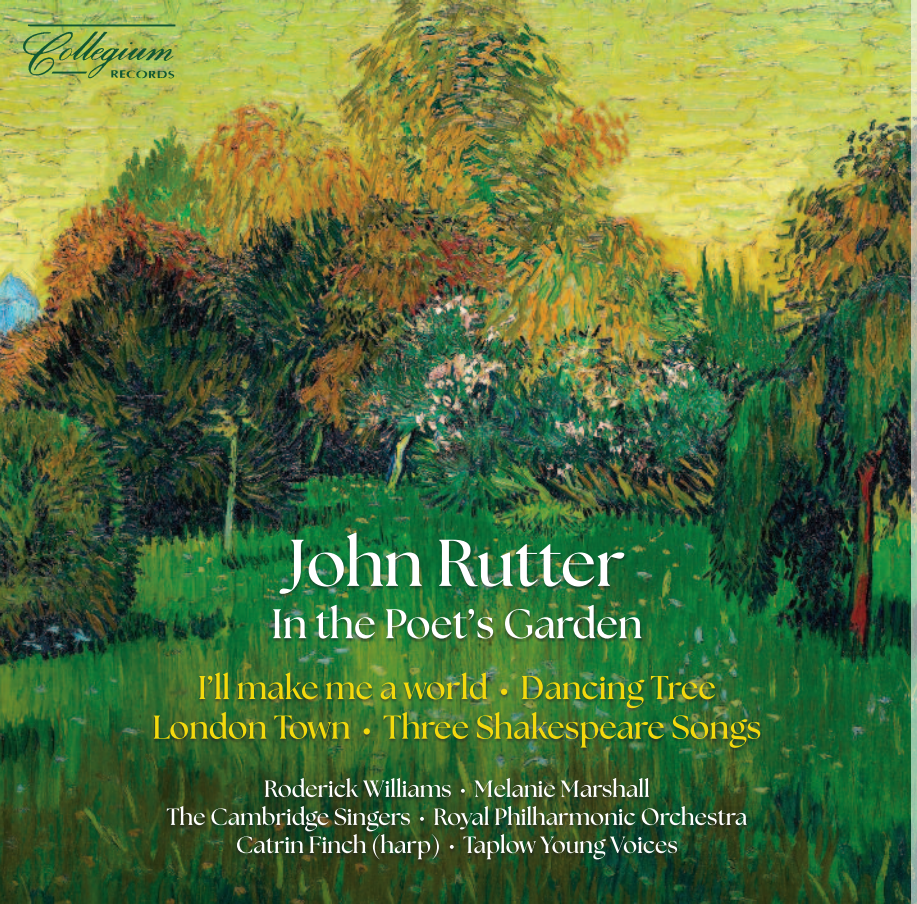
Collegium
RECORDS
John Rutter
In the Poet's Garden
I'll make me a world • Dancing Tree
London Town • Three Shakespeare Songs
Roderick Williams • Melanie Marshall
The Cambridge Singers • Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Catrin Finch (harp) • Taplow Young Voices

JOHN RUTTER: In the Poet's Garden

Choral settings of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, James Weldon Johnson, Charles Causley and others

Melanie Marshall (mezzo-soprano) and Roderick Williams (baritone)

[1] The Cambridge Singers

[2] Taplow Young Voices

[3] Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (leader: Duncan Riddell)

[4] Catrin Finch (solo harp)

[5] Matthew Jorysz (solo piano)

Conducted by Sir John Rutter

Total duration: 74' 11"

1 **I'LL MAKE ME A WORLD** (18' 25") (words by James Weldon Johnson) [1, 3]
Melanie Marshall • Roderick Williams

2 – 7 **LONDON TOWN: A choral celebration** (23' 46") [1, 2, 3]

2 **Prologue: The bells of London** (6' 20") (words by Delphine Chalmers)

3 **London Zoo** (1' 32") (words by John Rutter)

4 **Mind the gap** (4' 22") (words by Delphine Chalmers)

5 **Lines written in the Tower of London** (2' 48") (words by Sir Walter Raleigh)

6 **The River's Tale** (3' 22") (words by Rudyard Kipling)

7 **Finale and Epilogue** (5' 06") (words by William Wordsworth)

8 – 14 **DANCING TREE: A cycle of Charles Causley settings for mixed choir and harp** (19' 38") [1, 4]

8 **Stone in the water** and **Foxglove** (4' 13")

9 **In my garden** (4' 00")
Soprano solo: Grace Davidson

10 **Dandelion** (2' 28")

11 **Daniel Brent** (1' 04")

12 **Spin me a web, spider** (1' 53")

13 **At Candlemas** (3' 00")

14 **I am the song** (2' 42")

15 – 17 **THREE SHAKESPEARE SONGS for unaccompanied mixed choir** (7' 04") [1]

15 **O mistress mine** (1' 49")

16 **Be not afeard** (3' 15")

17 **Sigh no more, ladies (1' 54")**

18 **WHEN MUSIC SOUNDS** (3' 58")
(Words by Walter de la Mare) [1, 5]

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John Rutter writes . . .

Any composer interested in vocal and choral music is both inspired and nourished by poetry. Second only to music, words are my great love, and from my earliest years I have enjoyed seeking out poetry that seems to invite musical setting. This album brings together some of my recent choral music where the words provided the first inspiration and the music followed.

I'll make me a world

James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) was an American poet, writer and civil rights activist of predominantly Caribbean heritage. His poetic account of the biblical story of creation captivated me many years ago when I first encountered it in an anthology of Christian verse edited by the English poet Charles Causley – of whom more later – and I made a musical setting of it for children's choir which, perhaps providentially, did not satisfy me. I laid it aside, but with a mental note to try again later. The opportunity to do so, but with the fuller resources of two soloists, adult choir, and orchestra, came about in 2023, by which time I was perhaps better equipped for the task. Two generous benefactors, Nathan and Marilyn Hayward, expressed a wish that I would write a new sacred choral work of about twenty minutes duration, for performance in London's St Paul's Cathedral by the Bach Choir – I have the honour of being their president – and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra – who have recently accorded me the title of their Artist Laureate. I felt I was writing for friends, a pleasure crowned by being granted my cherished colleagues Melanie Marshall and Roderick Williams as the two soloists. In the vast space of St Paul's Cathedral a large chorus is called for, but for the more intimate medium of a recording, I was delighted to be able to call on my own much smaller choir the Cambridge Singers. The music of *I'll make me a world* is at least partly inspired by the music that James Weldon Johnson would himself have known in 1920s America: blues, gospel, jazz, Broadway, and probably the new

sounds of the young George Gershwin. These styles seemed to spring naturally out of the text and to be the right ones to bring it to life. My intention was to allow my own style to absorb them, with a due sense of reverence and respect.

London Town was written in 2019 in celebration of the 80th birthday of June Keyte, a dear friend and the inspirational director of Children's International Voices of Enfield, a family of choirs based in that north London borough. She and her husband, the distinguished baritone Christopher Keyte, suggested a work celebrating London itself, an idea which, as a Londoner, I was very happy to adopt. In seeking texts, I thought it would be refreshing to commission some new ones from a young poet in addition to choosing familiar ones I already had in mind by Wordsworth, Kipling, and Raleigh. Delphine Chalmers, a first-year English literature student at Oxford, had recently come to my attention with texts she had provided for my composer colleague Bob Chilcott, and she wrote two richly imaginative poems for me, one celebrating the bells of London, the other *(Mind the gap)* taking us on a time-travelling train ride through London past and present. I confess to writing the words of *London Zoo* myself, recalling my own visits there as a child. The resources available for the 2019 premiere were a mixed youth choir, a younger children's choir, and piano. For this recording I have recast the piano accompaniment for an instrumental ensemble drawn from principal players in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and allocated the mixed-choir part to the Cambridge Singers. Sadly, June Keyte died in 2021 and Christpher Keyte in 2024, but I am delighted that I was able to call on the Taplow Young Voices, directed by another luminary of the children's choir world, my friend Gillian Dibden, to take on the role of the children's choir.

Dancing Tree (2024) came about as a result of a rather different invitation, this one from the St. Charles Singers, a chamber choir based in Illinois. I have enjoyed guest-conducting this excellent choir on a number of occasions and Jeff Hunt, their

founder-director, is a good friend. He shares my love of poetry, and was happy to accept my suggestion of a cycle of Charles Causley settings, with harp accompaniment. Charles Causley (1917–2003) was a Cornish poet and schoolteacher who had a lifelong love of the folklore and legends of Cornwall, and also possessed the rare gift of writing for children but not writing down to them. His poetry – generally expressed in deceptively simple words, always with a touch of the unexpected – is highly musical, perhaps reflecting Causley's experience playing for a time in a local dance band. Sometimes whimsical, sometimes mystical, sometimes speaking with the voice of folk poetry or even nursery rhyme, Causley is a gift to any composer.

The **Three Shakespeare Songs** for unaccompanied choir started out as just one Shakespeare song, *Be not afeard*, written in 2017 for my good friends the King's Singers. With only minimal adaptation it became a mixed-choir piece, but I felt it needed two companions to make a set of three. In 2022 I turned to a sketch of *O mistress mine* that I had never worked up, and wrote *Sigh no more, ladies* to complete the set – joining a long procession of composers who have found inspiration in Shakespeare's timeless texts. The complete set was premièred by the dedicatees, Mark Ford and the Purcell Singers, in that year.

When music sounds is a setting for mixed choir and piano of a lovely poem by Walter de la Mare (1873–1956) which – strangely, in view of its subject matter – has as far as I know never been set to music before. I wrote it in 2022 at the request of a good friend (how often that seems to have been the case!), Philip Brunelle, founder-conductor of VocalEssence, an important Minneapolis-based concert organization. 2022 was Philip's 40th anniversary season, and I thought that a gentle ode to music itself might be appropriate. For no reason I can explain I started to hear Bach's C major Prelude from Book I of the '48' in my head, and I made it the basis of my setting, distanced as far as it is possible to go from C major in our system of tuning by writing it in G flat major, one of my favourite keys.

TEXTS

1 I'LL MAKE ME A WORLD

And God stepped out on space,
And he looked around and said:
I'm lonely –
I'll make me a world.

As far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,
And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,
And God said: That's good!

Then God reached out and took the light in his hands,
And God rolled the light around in his hands
Until he made the sun;
And he set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.
And the light that was left from making the sun
God gathered it up in a shining ball
And flung it against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
Then down between
The darkness and the light
He hurled the world;
And God said: That's good!

Then God himself stepped down –
And the sun was on his right hand,
And the moon was on his left;
The stars were clustered about his head,
And the earth was under his feet.
And God walked, and where he trod
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
And bulged the mountains up.

Then he stopped and looked and saw
That the earth was hot and barren.
So God stepped over to the edge of the world
And he spat out the seven seas –
He batted his eyes, and the lightnings flashed –
He clapped his hands, and the thunders rolled –
And the waters above the earth came down,
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed,
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms,
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,
And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared
And curled itself around his shoulder.

Then God raised his arm and he waved his hand
Over the sea and over the land,
And he said: Bring forth! Bring forth!
And quicker than God could drop his hand,
Fishes and fowls

And beasts and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings.
And God said: That's good!

Then God walked around,
And God looked around
On all that he had made.
He looked at his sun,
And he looked at his moon,
And he looked at his little stars;
He looked on his world
With all its living things,
And God said: I'm lonely still.

Then God sat down –
On the side of a hill where he could think;
By a deep, wide river he sat down;
With his head in his hands,
God thought and thought,
Till he thought, I'll make me a man!

Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled him down;
And there the great God Almighty
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night
Who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand;
This great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till he shaped it in his own image;
Then into it he blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.
Amen. Amen.

James Weldon Johnson

2 – 7 LONDON TOWN

2 Prologue: The bells of London

How many miles to London town,
To London town, to London town,
How many miles to London town?
Threescore and ten.
Can I get there by candlelight,
By candlelight, by candlelight,
Can I get there by candlelight?
Aye, and back again.

Traditional rhyme

Perched beneath the spire-pricked clouds,
We hold the city's songs.
You'll hear us echo on the wind:
Vivos voco, mortuos plango.
On the rhyme and chime of our tumbling peal
The bride and groom appear;
With fingers interlaced, they chase
The lilac pigeons from the steps
In clouds of curling confetti.
The future sealed with a kiss,
We toll a toast to happiness.

On the shrill wagging of our clapper tongues
The city wakes from sleep.
Our coarse throats hoarse with dust,
We sound the alarm for fire, war and plague
Into the starless night.
Custodians of London's streets,
We keep our steadfast watch of love.

On the keening wail of our requiem
The black-clad mourners step.
Our wheels grinding, turning,
We peal full-circle chimes for well-lived lives,
The promise of eternal rest.
Our rippling prayers trembling soft
In the hum of silence after sound.

Our cheeks blush bronze at the fireworks' flirting,
Welcoming New Year.
Loose-lipped our voices trip across
The Thames in clamouring chorus,
Clanging their cacophony.
Our many steepled voices sing:
Vivos voco, mortuos plango.

Delphine Chalmers

3 London Zoo

Whenever I go to the London Zoo
The animals all know what to do:
The lions roar and the tigers growl,
The leopards yawn and the panthers prowl;
They're just like cats when you see them play . . .
But keep well away!
The giraffes have quite an elegant air,
Strolling here and there,
But the elephants carry a heavy load,
They lumber along on the jungle road;
And down in the grass the cobras crawl,
But I really don't like them at all,
So I run and watch the kangaroos hop,
Licking my ice-cream fresh from the shop.
I wave to the monkeys and stare at the bears,
Feel sad for the panda with no one who cares;
Then I think to myself riding home on the bus:
Do *they* get bored just looking at us?

John Rutter

4 Mind the gap

Whistling, whirring, stirring,
Hurtling backwards in our seats,
We're tapping out a time-hop two-step:
Mind the gap and feel the beat.

Racing down the Jubilee Line
To Southwark in sixteen-o-nine
We watch ruffed actors play the round
On long white knuckle nights.
The Bard may tug his beard in fright
But wisdom will shine through:
Our destiny is in our hands –
To thine own self be true.

Change here for the Northern Line
For London Bridge and burning lime.
We hear the whip-snap screech of fire
Tear down Pudding Lane.
The Thames is trembling at the flames,
But London will be saved:
The buckets passed from hand to hand
Prove hardship can be braved.

So next we're speeding down the Bakerloo Line,
We reach two-two-one B in time
To glimpse the slinking sleuth
In search of clues in cobbled lanes;
He rattles off his tight-lipped quips,
His answer is spot on:
'Always trust your instincts –
Elementary is how it's done.'

But when we reach Westminster
In the spring of nineteen-forty-five
We see this is a city
That a blitz could not destroy.
One voice of the nation
Has brought the country to its feet;
We kept the home fires burning
Till the day when there was peace.

And as we steam into King's Cross
The engine breathes a sigh;
We hear the cries of bustling porters:
Platform nine-and-three-quarters!
Our words a spell, an incantation,
A promise for the future.
We plot the map of London's streets.
Mind the gap and feel the beat!

Delphine Chalmers

5 Lines written in the Tower of London

Even such is Time, which takes in trust
Our youth, our joys, and all we have,
And pays us but with age and dust;
Who in the dark and silent grave,
When we have wandered all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days:
And from which earth and grave, and dust,
The Lord shall raise me up, I trust.

Sir Walter Raleigh

6 The River's Tale

Twenty bridges from Tower to Kew–
Twenty bridges or twenty-two–
Wanted to know what the River knew,
For they were young and the Thames was old,
And this was the tale that the River told:

I walk my beat through London Town,
Five hours up and seven down.
Up I go till I end my run
At Tide-end-town, which is Teddington.
Down I come with the mud in my hands
And plaster it over the Maplin Sands.
But I'd have you know that these waters of mine
Were once a branch of the River Rhine,
When hundreds of miles to the East I went
And England was joined to the Continent.

I remember the bat-winged lizard-birds,
The Age of Ice and the mammoth herds,
And the giant tigers that stalked them down
Through Regent's Park into Camden Town.
And I remember like yesterday
The earliest Cockney who came my way,
When he pushed through the forest that lined the Strand,
With paint on his face and a club in his hand.
He was death to feather and fin and fur.
He trapped my beavers at Westminster.
He netted my salmon, he hunted my deer,
He killed my heron off Lambeth Pier.
He fought my neighbour with axes and swords,
Flint or bronze, at my upper fords,
While down at Greenwich, for slaves and tin,
The tall Phoenician ships stole in,
And North Sea war-boats, painted and gay,
Flashed like dragon-flies, Erith way;
And Norseman and Arab and Gaul and Greek
Drank with the Britons in Barking Creek,
And life was gay, and the world was new,
And I was a mile across at Kew!
But the Romans came with a heavy hand,
And bridged and roaded and ruled the land,
And the Romans left and the Danes blew in–
And that's where your history-books begin!

Rudyard Kipling

7 Finale and epilogue

Earth has not anything to show more fair;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

William Wordsworth

How many miles to London town,
To London town, to London town,
How many miles to London town?
Threescore and ten.
Can I get there by candlelight,
By candlelight, by candlelight,
Can I get there by candlelight?
Aye, and back again.

8 – 14 DANCING TREE (poems by Charles Causley)

8 Stone in the water and Foxglove

Stone in the water,
Stone on the sand,
Whom shall I marry
When I get to land?
Will he be handsome
Or will he be plain,
Strong as the sun

Or rich as the rain?

Will he be dark
Or will he be fair,
And what will be the colour
That shines in his hair?

Will he come late
Or will he come soon,
At morning or midnight
Or afternoon?

What will he say
Or what will he sing,
And will he be holding
A plain gold ring?

Stone in the water
Still and small,
Tell me if he comes,
Or comes not at all.

Foxglove purple,
Foxglove white,
Fit for a lady
By day or night.

Foxglove bring,
To friend and stranger
A witches' thimble
For the finger.
Foxglove on
The sailing sea,
Storm and tempest
There shall be.

Foxglove sleeping
Under the sky,
Watch the midnight
With one eye.

Foxglove burning
In the sun,
Ring your bells
And my day is done.

9 In my garden

In my garden
Grows a tree
Dances day
And night for me,
Four in a bar
Or sometimes three
To music secret
As can be.

Nightly to
Its hidden tune
I watch it move
Against the moon,
Dancing to
A silent sound,
One foot planted
In the ground.

Dancing tree,
When may I hear
Day or night
Your music clear?
What the note
And what the song
That you sing
The seasons long?

It is written
Said the tree,
On the pages
Of the sea;
It is there
At every hand
On the pages
Of the land;

Whether waking
Or in dream:
Voice of meadow-grass
And stream,
And out of
The ringing air
Voice of sun
And moon and star.

It is there
For all to know
As tides shall turn
And wildflowers grow;
There for you
And there for me,
Said the glancing
Dancing tree.

10 Dandelion

Dandelion,
Yellow crown,
Now your petals
Are all gone,
Speak to me
The time of day
As I blow
Your seeds away.

If at one breath
They are flown
I need never hurry home,
But if any
Seeds remain
I must to
My home again.

Dandelion,
Yellow head,
Tell me when
I shall be wed.
Country clock
Without a chime
When shall be
My wedding time?

Dandelion,
Tell me fair
How many children
I shall bear,
Or tell me true
As moon or sun
If there shall be
Never a one.

Dandelion,
Flowering clear
Through the seasons
Of the year
Teach me simple,
Teach me slow
All these things
That I must know.

11 Daniel Brent

Daniel Brent, a man of Kent,
Went to market without a cent.
He chose an apple, he chose a pear,
He chose a comb for his crooked hair,
He chose a fiddle, he chose a flute,
He chose a rose for his Sunday suit,
He chose some pickles, he chose some ham,
He chose a pot of strawberry jam,
He chose a kite to climb the sky.

How many things did Daniel buy?

But when it came the time to pay,
Daniel Brent he ran away.

12 Spin me a web, spider

Spin me a web, spider,
Across the window-pane
For I shall never break it
And make you start again.

Cast your net of silver
As soon as it is spun,
And hang it with the morning dew
That glitters in the sun.

It's strung with pearls and diamonds,
The finest ever seen,
Fit for any royal King
Or any royal Queen.

Would you, could you, bring it down
In the dust to lie?
Any day of the week, my dear,
Said the nimble fly.

13 At Candlemas

'If Candlemas be fine and clear
There'll be two winters in that year';

But all the day the drumming sun
Brazened it out that spring had come,

And the tall elder on the scene
Unfolded the first leaves of green.

But when another morning came
With frost, as Candlemas with flame,

The sky was steel, there was no sun,
The elder leaves were dead and gone.

Out of a cold and crusted eye
The stiff pond stared up at the sky,

And on the scarcely breathing earth
A killing wind fell from the north;

But still within the elder tree
The strong sap rose, though none could see.

14 I am the Song

I am the song that sings the bird.
I am the leaf that grows the land.
I am the tide that moves the moon.
I am the stream that halts the sand.
I am the cloud that drives the storm.
I am the earth that lights the sun.

I am the fire that strikes the stone.
I am the clay that shapes the hand.
I am the word that speaks the man.

Charles Causley poems reprinted by kind permission of David Higham Associates Ltd

15 – 17 THREE SHAKESPEARE SONGS

15 O mistress mine

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O! stay and hear; your true love's coming,
  That can sing both high and low.
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers meeting
  Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
  What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty;
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

Twelfth Night, Act II, scene 3

16 Be not afeard

Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and
  hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open and show
  riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I wak'd
I cried to dream again.

The Tempest, Act III, scene 2

17 Sigh no more, ladies

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
  Men were deceivers ever;
One foot in sea, and one on shore,
  To one thing constant never,
    Then sigh not so,
    But let them go,
  And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
  Into Hey nonny, nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no mo
  Of dumps so dull and heavy;
The fraud of men was ever so
  Since summer first was leavy.
    Then sigh not so,
    But let them go,
  And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
  Into Hey nonny, nonny.

Much Ado abut Nothing, Act II, scene 3

18 WHEN MUSIC SOUNDS

When music sounds, gone is the earth I know,
And all her lovely things even lovelier grow;
Her flowers in vision flame, her forest trees
Lift burdened branches, stilled with ecstasies.

When music sounds, out of the water rise
Naiads whose beauty dims my waking eyes,
Rapt in strange dreams burns each enchanted face,
With solemn echoing stirs their dwelling-place.

When music sounds, all that I was I am
Ere to this haunt of brooding dust I came;
While from Time's woods break into distant song
The swift-winged hours as I hasten along.

Walter de la Mare

Soprano
Sumei Bao-Smith, Eleanor Bray, Grace Davidson, Katy Hill, Victoria Meteyard, Alison Ponsford Hill, Aine Smith, Clover Willis

Alto
Amy Blythe, Alice Hulett, Martha McLorinan,Tania Murphy, Rosie Parker, Joy Sutcliffe

Tenor
William Balkwill, Thomas Castle, Mark Dobell, James Gant, James Robinson, Edward Woodhouse

Bass
Alex Ashworth, Jonathan Brown, Tom Butler, Piers Kennedy, Richard Latham, Stuart O'Hara

Collegium RECORDS

COLCD 141
Stereo | DDD
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Recording produced by Chris Hazell
Recorded in Sinfonia Smith Square, London
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January 2025 (tracks 1, and 8–14)
Tracks 2–7, and 18 recorded in St Barnabas Church,
Ealing, London in May 2025

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