

# SEMPITERNAM | choral music by Rhona Clarke



State Choir LATVIJA | Māris Sirmāis

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1	O Vis Aeternitatis (2020)	5:49
Two Marian Anthems (2007):		
2	I. Regina Caeli	3:17
3	II. Salve Regina	6:47
4	Ave Atque Vale (2017)	5:15
Three Carols on Medieval Texts (2014):		
5	I. Glad and Blithe	2:46
6	II. Lullay, my Liking	4:59
7	III. Make we Merry	2:01
Requiem (2020):		
8	I. Introit	6:58
9	II. Lux Aeterna	4:24
10	III. Pie Jesu	3:36
11	IV. In Paradisum	5:06
12	The Kiss (2008)	4:12
13	A Song for St Cecilia's Day (1991)	4:57
14	Do Not Stand at my Grave and Weep (2006)	3:34
15	The Old Woman (2016)	3:30
16	Rorate Caeli (1994)	5:19
Total playing time		72:36

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State Choir LATVIJA

conducted by Māris Sirmāis

## Rhona Clarke: The power and physicality of the voice

While Rhona Clarke's compositional voice has changed and altered direction at various points, a constant thread, from the time she began composing to the present day, has been her engagement with choral music. This is not just due to the strong choral culture in Ireland (though that has certainly helped with the process of disseminating her work), but is linked to her own physical experience of music making. Though piano is her first instrument, central to Clarke's growth as a musician has been the sensation of being part of the sonorous blend of choral voices.

Clarke was fifteen years old when she joined the Lindsay Singers, a female-voice choir in Dublin. Later, during her time as student in University College Dublin and her PhD studies at Queen's University Belfast, Clarke sang with various college choirs, and also for a time with the chamber choir Gaudete. This long engagement with choral singing gave her a real 'insider knowledge' of how to write effectively for choral voices. Tellingly, when discussing her time with the Lindsay Singers, Clarke recalled enjoying singing second soprano or first alto where she would be 'in the thick of the harmony'. When asked about particular performances she cited the rich harmonies of Verdi's *Laudi alla Vergine Maria* on the one hand, but also the initial shock of encountering *Prayer before birth* by Elizabeth Maconchy. The challenge of Maconchy's language became key to encouraging her engagement with contemporary music and thus slowly propelled her in the direction of becoming a composer.

A more direct intervention in this trajectory by the Lindsay Singers occurred after she had left UCD and taken up a position as a music teacher. It was only at this point that she began tentatively and without guidance to compose, searching for a means of expressing her own voice in music. In 1984 Ethna Barror, the director of the Lindsay Singers, decided to perform Clarke's second composition *Suantraí Ghráinne* at the Cork International Choral Festival where the piece won the composition prize (the Seán Ó Riada trophy). Greatly encouraged by this, Clarke went on to study at the

Ennis Summer School with John Buckley and James Wilson and quickly established a position for herself in the Irish contemporary music scene.

The selection of music on this album, ranging over a thirty-year period, gives us an overview of Clarke's writing for choir and illustrates how some of these formative experiences have impacted on her work while also charting the increasing individuality of her voice. Clarke acknowledges the pivotal role in her recent work of the orchestral piece *Shift* (2013) in which there was a move from a more purely lyrical approach to a greater interest in contrasting textures and the exploration of timbral effects. In the choral music this manifests itself in the increased palette of sounds utilised with glissandi, percussive sounds such as stamping and a more thorough exploration of different degrees of speech and sprechgesang, often simultaneously with pure sung tone.

Clarke writes for choir with a strong sense of the choral tradition. She frequently sets Latin texts, drawn by the sound of the words and how well their open vowels suit the voice, but also in the knowledge that the words are familiar to most choir members from the dominant role such texts play in the repertoire. Musically her work rubs against the tradition in a variety of ways. The three carols *Make we Merry* might play along at first with our expectations of a modern carol jousting with medieval texts, the modal language refracted through a modern Anglican choral sound, but the harmonic inflections in the tender central lullaby 'Lullay my Liking' point out beyond imagined medieval hearth, or twentieth century English cathedral nave, to a more intimate jazz-infused venue. In a more direct confrontation with the past *O Vis Aeternitatis* explodes out of the latent energy of a chant by Hildegard of Bingen.

The first section of *Salve Regina* seems to evoke renaissance practice with a long melodic line, draped across the tenor parts to form the core of the music, around which the other parts are gathered. As the piece progresses the increasingly opulent sounds recreate that formative experience of swimming in the midst of rich harmonies, the work only subsiding after a climax on the words 'O dulcis' (O sweet). Singling out a word or phrase within the larger text for expressive expansion is a common compositional strategy such as in

*O Vis Aeternitatis* where there is a passionate five-part outburst of dissonance on the words ‘a maximo dolore’ (greatest suffering). It is used to particularly devastating effect in the austere ritual of *Ave Atque Vale*. In this work textures are stripped back, until the words ‘Accipe fraterno multum manantia fletu’ (Accept a brother’s drowning tears) trigger an abandonment of the atmosphere of detached reserve in favour of a more visceral expression of grief.

A substantial portion of the music on this album deals with death and loss, but this does not result in any lack of musical variety, with the approaches ranging from the macabre humour of *The Old Woman*, through the quiet grief of *Do not stand at my Grave*, to the stark tragedy of *Ave Atque Vale*. Clarke’s compassionate viewpoint can be seen in her setting of the Requiem text in which the passages evoking hell and damnation are omitted in favour of reflections on rest and light. This, the most recent work in the programme, encapsulates the diversity of Clarke’s approach to choral writing. On the one hand the ‘Pie Jesu’ in particular epitomises the careful creation of a simple and memorable texture that avoids the simplistic. By contrast, in the ‘Lux Aeterna’, the image of light is conjured by diaphanous folds of sound that only occasionally coalesce onto more clearly defined homophonic textures.

Whether it is the summoning up of images of immutable light (‘Lux Aeterna’), the evocation of visceral pain (*Ave Atque Vale*) or the sensual tracing in sound of the lines of a woman’s lips (*The Kiss*), Clarke finds a directness and immediacy of expression enabling her to sing these feelings into being.

*Mark Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer TU Dublin Conservatoire*

## The Music – notes by the composer

### **O Vis Aeternitatis (2020)**

*O Vis Aeternitatis* is a setting of a responsory text by Hildegard of Bingen. Dated c.1150, the words centre on the power of eternity, a concept often linked with divinity. In this version, the structure is changed slightly, leaving out the final response and ending instead with the half-doxology: *Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto* which is given a lively, fugal treatment. The opening melisma is influenced by Hildegard's chant and there is a sequence of descending suspensions on the word “*dolores*”, emphasizing the savior's “greatest suffering”.

*O Vis Aeternitatis* was commissioned by Music for Galway for their *Abendmusik* series with funds from Galway 2020 European Capital of Culture. The first performance on 22 November 2020 was sung by Resurgam, artistic director Mark Duley, conducted by Peter Whelan at St Nicholas' Collegiate Church, Galway. The concert, titled *Resounding Landscapes*, was live streamed as a result of the restrictions during the Covid pandemic.

### **Two Marian Anthems (2007)**

The commission brief here was for a piece for a concert series titled: *The Eternal Feminine*. Seeking an icon of the eternal and feminine, the Virgin Mary seemed an obvious choice. The composition started with ‘Salve Regina’ which is inspired by the central movement of Bartok's Fourth String Quartet. The opening idea is a transposition of the static chord used by Bartok while the emerging tenor melody is at first like plainchant and later more like Bartok's cello line - an elaborate improvisatory melody. The hymn remains slow and restrained throughout. The text, chosen to suit this musical idea, in turn influenced musical decisions such as the chant-like melodic lines.

‘Regina Caeli’ was written to complement and contrast with ‘Salve Regina’. Sketched in a single day during a residency at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in County Monaghan, it has a more exuberant style – lively and rhythmic. On “*hora pro nobis*” the music reflects on the words using a slow chordal build-up before the final section which is a development of the opening idea. The anthems were dedicated to my mother in the final year of her life: “for Theo (my mother) who is always singing”.

*Two Marian Anthems* was commissioned by The National Chamber Choir (Chamber Choir Ireland) with funds from The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

### **Ave Atque Vale (2018)**

This piece was commissioned by the Choir of the Chapels Royal for Britain 2018 to commemorate the end of WW1. The first performance was by the Choir of the Chapels Royal directed by Colm Carey at St. Peter ad Vincula, HM Tower of London on the 25th May 2018. The concept for the commemoration event was to commission five works to be inserted between movements of Hubert Parry’s *Songs of Farewell*. In the first performance this piece was placed between movements 4 and 5.

Catullus’ poem is an outpouring of grief on the death of his brother who was killed in battle. There are two other fragments of text: rhetorical questions : *Cui bono fuisset? Qui prodest?* (For whose benefit? For whose profit?), still in usage today in legal contexts, (“qui bono” is attributed to Cicero who was quoting a term frequently used by the consul and judge, L. Cassius). Here, in conjunction with Catullus 101 they serve to question the reason for the untimely death of a soldier of ancient Rome and indeed, all acts of war.

## **Make We Merry: three carols on medieval texts (2014)**

The three carols were first performed by Chamber Choir Ireland, directed by Paul Hillier, at Christ Church Cathedral in December 2014. The composition began some years earlier, in midsummer while staying at the Cill Rialig Centre, Ballinskelligs, Co. Kerry. The medieval influence in the music is in keeping with the texts, but was also inspired by the sense of place: one of the Skellig Islands is known for the ruins of its 6<sup>th</sup> century monastic site. The musical structure largely adheres to the strophic nature of early carols. ‘Glad and Blithe’ uses drones and open 5ths building to richer harmonic and textural content as it progresses. ‘Lullay My Liking’ paints a tranquil and hypnotic picture of mother and child while ‘Make We Merry’ with its jaunty syncopations provides a contrasting, celebratory mood.

## **Requiem (2020)**

I Introit | II Lux Aeterna | III Pie Jesu | IV In Paradisum

I began to compose *Requiem* in March 2020 at the time of government restrictions due to Covid-19. The choice of text had nothing to do with the pandemic: it is simply a text I had long wanted to set and chose it to complete a programme for a portrait album with State Choir LATVIJA. Setting Latin sacred texts has become unfashionable, but these texts are very much part of my background, including early childhood memories of Latin rituals, learning plainchant and studying Latin at school. I don’t see it as a ‘dead’ language, but rather as a ‘neutral’ one which allies superbly with the singing voice.

The four movements, which overlap in text and meaning, use various musical techniques of repetition. The Introit is based on a harmonic ostinato sung by four-part basses and two tenor lines. Over this, sopranos enter and soar towards “*luceat*” (light). The female voices take over in a break from the ostinato singing “*Te decet hymnus*” with the full choir coming together to plead forcefully, “*exaudi*”.



The ostinato is stated again at the return of “*requiem*” this time joined by the upper voices.

In ‘Lux Aeterna’ voices enter in turn with a hovering figure which repeats in various iterations throughout the movement to create a shimmering texture. The interval of a second dominates both melody and harmony, though tonal centres emerge: first A flat and then G (minor and major).

‘Pie Jesu’ is the most straightforward and slowest of the settings here; it is a passacaglia with the same two-bar melodic line sung by sopranos throughout while the harmonies change. The chorale is repeated with a soprano solo above. The word “*sempiternam*”, not sung previously, is saved for the ending.

The final movement sees the choir mostly singing in homophonic texture while two solo voices sing the Gregorian antiphon ‘In Paradisum’ alternating, in a heterophonic fashion, at the choir’s cadence points. An aleatoric section with independent parts reflects on the importance of the word “*aeternam*”, repeating this a number of times. Following are three statements of “*requiem*”, ascending, sung by four soloists; this creates a peaceful, reflective ending to the requiem.

### **The Kiss (2008)**

*The Kiss* was commissioned jointly by The National Chamber Choir of Ireland and The Cork International Choral Festival’s 35<sup>th</sup> Seminar on Contemporary Choral Music. It is dedicated to John Fitzpatrick (director of the Cork International Choral Festival 1993-2019) and his wife Jane. The first performance was given by Chamber Choir Ireland conducted by Bo Holten at St Finbarre’s Cathedral, Cork on 2nd May 2008. The impetus was to write a lively, madrigal-style piece which would be challenging but also within the capabilities of a good amateur choir.

The text, a poem by Ulick O’Connor, was chosen for its beautiful sounds and content. For the most part the tonality is based on an octatonic scale which yields an array of

diminished chords. In keeping with the madrigal tradition, there is much interaction between the voices which come together and become a little more subdued at the question “how could I be so sure”. This forms a middle section with solo soprano. The urgency of the opening then returns before a slow seductive ending, reiterating the opening plea: “Kiss me specially”.

### **A Song for St Cecilia’s Day (1991)**

*A Song for St Cecilia’s Day* was commissioned by Caintairí Avondale (Avondale Singers). Their director, Mary O’Flynn, requested the work as a gift for the choir’s founder and former conductor, Seán Creamer, on the occasion of his retirement from the Department of Education. Seán was outstanding in his encouragement of choral singing amongst children and young people and was the founder and director of The National Children’s Choir, The Dublin Secondary Schools’ Choir and The Park Singers. The first stanza of Dryden’s text was chosen for its light, bright mood and cheerful energy not to mention the suitability of “musick” as a theme.

As a musical response to the poem, I very much liked the idea of music creating order out of chaos and the reflection on the ability of man to choose from “all the compass of the notes” to produce “the diapason”. With this in mind, the main ideas are based on the dissemination of a major or minor chord which have traditionally formed the consummate diapason in the music of western and other civilisations. Commissioned by Cantairí Avondale with funds from The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, it was first performed by The Queen’s Chamber Choir conducted by Sylvia Crawford on 12 December 1991, at the Harty Room, Queens University Belfast.

### **Do Not Stand At My Grave and Weep (2006)**

This piece was composed during the difficult time of my sister-in-law’s terminal illness. It is dedicated to Pat Tubbert Clarke who died a short time after the piece was completed. Having found the text online, the composition was an intuitive

response both to the words and the sadness experienced. The interest is mainly harmonic with rhythms based on natural speech. The premiere was given in 2010 at Weber Hall, University of Minnesota, Duluth, USA, by the UMD Chamber Singers conducted by Dr Tina Thielan-Gaffey.

### **The Old Woman (2016)**

The Old Woman is a setting for SATB choir of a children's rhyme, which exists in many versions, some of which are over a hundred years old. It is dedicated to Laetare Vocal Ensemble and their director Róisín Blunnie, who commissioned the work. The first performance was given by Laetare at the Cork International Choral Festival in 2017. The setting reflects the dual scary/humorous aspect of the rhyme and contains numerous examples of word painting, for instance the winding motif in five-eight on "worms" alternating between altos and tenors and the glissando downwards on "fainted". There is also a musical quotation from Elizabeth Maconchy's *Prayer Before Birth* for female voices, a piece which influenced me greatly: "I am not yet dead", uses the melodic line of Maconchy's "I am not yet born" – a pun on birth/death as well as a small homage to this great composer.

### **Rorate Caeli (1994)**

*Rorate Caeli* was commissioned by the Cork International Choral Festival for the 34th Seminar on Contemporary Choral Music. It was first performed by Chamber Choir Ireland conducted by Colin Mawby at City Hall, Cork on 30th April 1994. Marked 'with gusto' the opening is a lively, mixed metre section based on a hypolydian mode. In keeping with the text, the mood is celebratory. The piece then calms down with a transition to aeolian mode for "*et nubes*" and a slower pace prevails. A joyous flourish of "*Alleluia*" reflect on the opening mood. Long melismas are used throughout on the words "*caeli*", "*Alleluia*" and "*iustum*". The unison statement of "*Rorate*" to finish, is like a demand for justice.



## O VIS AETERNITATIS

O vis aeternitatis  
que omnia ordinasti in corde tuo,  
per Verbum tuum omnia creata sunt  
sicut voluisti,  
et ipsum Verbum tuum  
induit carnem  
in formatione illa  
que educta est de Adam.

R. Et sic indumenta ipsius  
a maximo dolore  
abtersa sunt.

V. O quam magna est benignitas  
Salvatoris,  
qui omnia liberavit  
per incarnationem suam,  
quam divinitas exspiravit  
sine vinculo peccati.

R. Et sic indumenta ipsius  
a maximo dolore  
abtersa sunt.

Gloria Patri et Filio  
et Spiritui sancto.

[R. Et sic indumenta ipsius  
a maximo dolore  
abtersa sunt]

O power of Eternity:  
that all in order in your heart,  
through your Word all was created  
according to your will,  
and your very Word  
dressed as flesh  
in that same shape  
which was drawn from Adam.

R. And so his garments  
through greatest suffering  
were cleansed.

V. O how great is the goodness of the  
Savior,  
who has freed all  
by his own Incarnation,  
which divinity breathed into being  
without the chains of sin.

R. And so his garments  
through greatest suffering  
were cleansed.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit.

R. And so his garments  
through greatest suffering  
were cleansed.

*Hildegard of Bingen (c.1140–1179)*

*Translation: Rhona Clarke*

## TWO MARIAN ANTHEMS

### I Regina Caeli

Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia:  
Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,  
Resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia.  
Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

### II Salve Regina

Salve, Regina, mater misericordiae;  
Vita dulcedo et spes nostra, salve.  
Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Hevae.  
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes, in  
hac lacrimarum valle.  
Eja ergo, advocata nostra,  
Illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos  
converte.  
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,  
Nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.  
O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria

### AVE ATQUE VALE

(Catullus 101)

Multas per gentes et multa per aequora  
vectus  
advenio has miseras, frater, ad inferias,  
ut te postremo donarem munere mortis  
et mutam nequiquam adloquerer cinerem.  
Quandoquidem fortuna mihi tete abstulit  
ipsum.  
Heu miser indigne frater adempte mihi,  
nunc tamen interea haec, prisco quae more  
parentum

Queen of Heaven rejoice, alleluia:  
For He whom you merited to bear, alleluia,  
Has risen as He said, alleluia.  
Pray for us to God, alleluia.

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,  
our life, our sweetness and our hope.  
To you we cry, poor banished children  
of Eve;  
to you we send up our sighs,  
mourning and weeping in this vale of tears.  
Therefore, most gracious advocate,  
turn your merciful eyes toward us;  
and after this, our exile,  
show us the blessed fruit of thy womb,  
Jesus.  
O clement, o loving, o sweet Virgin Mary.

Through many countries and over many  
seas  
I have come, brother, to these funeral rites,  
to show you this final honour of the dead,  
and speak in vain to your mute ashes.  
Inasmuch as fate takes you, even you, from  
me.

Oh, brother, stolen from me so cruelly,  
now at least take these final offerings,

tradita sunt tristi munere ad inferias,  
Accipe fraterno multum manantia fletu,  
atque, in perpetuum, frater,  
ave atque vale.

*Gaius Valerius Catullus (84–54 BC)*

blessed by the tradition of our forefathers,  
gifts for the dead.

Accept a brother's drowning tears,  
and, for eternity, brother,  
Hail and Farewell.

## **MAKE WE MERRY** – Three Carols on Medieval Texts

### **I Glad and Blithe**

Glad and blithe mote ye be, may  
All that ever I here now see,  
*Alleluia!*

King of king-is Lord of all,  
Born he is in oxè stall,  
God is son of Heaven bright  
*Res Miranda.*

The sun that ever shineth bright,  
The star that ever giveth his light  
*Semper clara.*

Right as the star bringeth forth his beam,  
So the maid her barn team  
*Pariforma*

Nother the sterre for his beam,  
Nother the maide for her barnè-team  
*Fit corrupta.*

The cedar of Liban that groweth so high,  
Unto the hysope is made lie,  
*Vallenostra.*

God is son of Heaven bright  
Until a maid is he light,  
*Carne sumpta.*

*Anonymous (c.1450)*

## II Lullay My Liking

*Refrain:*

Lullay my liking,  
my dear Son, my Sweeting;  
Lullay my dear Heart,  
mine own dear Darling.

1. I saw a fair maiden  
Sitten and sing:  
She lullèd a little child,  
A sweet Lording  
*Lullay my liking . . .*

2. Eternal Lord is He  
That made allè thing;  
Of allè Lordès He is Lord,  
Of allè Kingès King.  
*Lullay my liking . . .*

3. There was mickle melody  
At that childès birth:  
All that were in were heaven's bliss  
They made mickle mirth.  
*Lullay my liking . . .*

4. Angels bright sang that night  
And saiden to that Child  
"Blessed be Thou and so be she  
That is so meek and mild."  
*Lullay my liking . . .*

*Anonymous (15th Century)*

## III Make We Merry

*Make we merry, both more and less  
For now is the time of Christmas.*

1. Let no man come into this hall,  
Groom, page nor yet marshall,  
But that some sport he bring withall,  
*For now is the time of Christmas.*

2. If that he say he cannot sing,  
Some other sport then let him bring,  
That it may please at this feasting,  
*For now is the time of Christmas.*

3. If he say he can naught do,  
Then for my love ask him no more,  
But to the stocks then let him go,  
*For now is the time of Christmas.*

*Anonymous (before 1536)*



## REQUIEM

### I Introit

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine:  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.  
Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion,  
et tibi reddetur votum in Ierusalem:  
exaudi orationem meam,  
ad te omnis caro veniet.  
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine:  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

### II Lux Aeterna

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine:  
Cum Sanctis tuis in aeternum: <sup>[1]</sup>quia pius  
es.  
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine:  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.  
Cum Sanctis tuis in aeternum: quia pius es.

### III Pie Jesu

Pie Iesu Domine, dona eis requiem.  
Dona eis requiem sempiternam.

### IV In Paradisum

In paradisum deducant te Angeli:  
in tuo adventu suscipiant te Martyres,  
et perducant te in civitatem sanctam  
Ierusalem  
Chorus Angelorum te suscipiat,  
et cum Lazaro quondam paupere  
aeternam habeas requiem.

Eternal rest give to them, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon them.  
It is fitting to sing a hymn to you, O God,  
in Zion;  
and to you a promise will be given in  
Jerusalem:  
hear my prayer;  
all flesh will come to you.  
Eternal rest give to them, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon them.

May eternal light shine upon them, O Lord:  
With your Saints for eternity: you who are  
gracious.  
Eternal rest give to them, O Lord,  
and may perpetual light shine upon them:  
With your Saints for eternity: you who are  
gracious.

Merciful Jesus, grant them rest,  
Grant them eternal rest.

May the Angels lead you into paradise:  
may the Martyrs receive you at your  
coming,  
and lead you into the holy city of  
Jerusalem.  
May the choir of Angels receive you,  
and with Lazarus, who once was poor,  
may you have eternal rest.

## THE KISS

She said to me,  
'Kiss me specially',  
And with her lips on mine  
Traced a design  
To show the way  
Bees on a drowsy day  
Suck honey from fuschia.  
How could I be so sure

That the artificer who spun  
The golden honeycomb  
For her at Erice,  
The goddess in exile,  
Could ever have gleaned  
What I found  
When I leaned  
To that command?

*Ulick O'Connor (1928-2019)*

## A SONG FOR ST CECILIA'S DAY

Text from: *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day, 1687*

FROM harmony, from heav'nly harmony,  
This universal frame began:  
When nature underneath a heap  
Of jarring atoms lay,  
And could not heave her head,  
The tuneful voice was heard from high,  
'Arise, ye more than dead!'  
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,  
In order to their stations leap,  
And Music's power obey.  
From harmony, from heav'nly harmony,  
This universal frame began:  
From harmony to harmony  
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,  
The diapason closing full in Man.

*John Dryden (1631–1700)*

## DO NOT STAND AT MY GRAVE AND WEEP

Do not stand at my grave and weep  
I am not there. I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints on snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry;  
I am not there. I did not die.

*Mary Elizabeth Frye (1905–2004)*

## THE OLD WOMAN

There was an old woman all skin and bone  
who lived near a graveyard all alone.  
She thought she'd go to church one day  
to hear the preacher sing and pray.

And when she came to the graveyard stile,  
she thought she'd stop and rest awhile;  
And when she came to the when she came  
to the graveyard door,  
she stopped to rest a little more.

But when she turned and looked around  
she saw a corpse upon the ground.  
The worms crawled out the worms  
crawled in,  
From up his nose down to his chin.

The worms crawled in, the worms  
crawled out  
Across his eyes his ears his mouth.  
The woman fainted with the shock  
and hit her head upon a rock.

They buried the woman, all skin and bone,  
And from the grave they heard her moan:  
'I am not yet dead', the woman cried.  
"You will be soon", the priest replied.

*Anonymous*

## RORATE CAELI

Rorate caeli desuper,  
et nubes pluant justum:  
aperiatur terra,  
et germinet Salvatorem.  
Alleluia.

Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei:  
et opera manuum eius  
annuntiat firmamentum.

Pour forth from the heavens above,  
and let the clouds rain justice.  
Let the earth open up  
and produce a Saviour.  
Alleluia.

The heavens declaim the glory of God,  
and the works of his hand  
are announced from the skies.

*Graduale Romanum P34–35*

*Translation: Rhona Clarke*

### Text Sources and acknowledgments

**O Vis Aeternitatis:** public domain: from various Internet sources

**Marian Anthems and Requiem:** traditional texts: public domain

**Ave Atque Vale:** Catullus: public domain.

**Glad and Blithe:** Anonymous, 15<sup>th</sup> century: public domain. Original is in the Selden Manuscript, Bodleian Library, Oxford: Selden B25, S. XV 2/4

**Lullay my Liking:** Anonymous (15<sup>th</sup> century): public domain. Original text in the Sloane Manuscript, British Library. Sourced from Richard Greene (ed.): *A Selection of English Carols* (Clarendon Press, 1962)

**Make we Merry:** Anonymous, 16<sup>th</sup> century: public domain. Original: Balliol College, Oxford, MS 354 XVI Century. Sourced from Richard Greene (ed.): *A Selection of English Carols* (Clarendon Press, 1962)

**The Kiss:** from *The Kiss – New and Selected Poems and Translations* (2008) by Ulick O'Connor, published by Salmon Poetry. text reproduced by kind permission of the author.

**A Song for St. Cecilia's Day (Dryden):** public domain. Source: Penguin Book of English Verse (1956)

**Do Not Stand at my Grave and Weep:** Attributed to Mary Elizabeth Frye (1932) . Although the origin of the poem was disputed until later in her life, Mary Frye's authorship was purportedly confirmed in 1998 after research by Abigail Van Buren, a newspaper columnist.

**The Old Woman:** traditional, public domain. Source: <https://www.scaryforkids.com/old-woman>

**Rorate Caeli:** Graduale Romanum, pp 34-35: public domain

## THE COMPOSER

**Rhona Clarke** was born in Dublin where her early musical experiences were in piano and choral singing. She studied music at University College, Dublin, and completed a PhD at Queen's University, Belfast. Clarke's output includes choral, chamber, orchestral and electronic works. She has received commissions from RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, The Sydney Philharmonia Chorus, Chamber Choir Ireland, the Choir of the Chapels Royal, the Cork International Choral Festival, Concorde, Music Network and the National Concert Hall, among others. Her work has been performed and broadcast throughout Ireland and worldwide.

*SHIFT* for orchestra, a work commissioned by RTÉ and performed by the RTÉNSO conducted by Gavin Maloney, was selected to represent Ireland in the 2014 International Rostrum of Composers. Since 2009 she has been collaborating with visual artist Marie Hanlon, including short experimental films with music, live music with visual projections and joint exhibitions. Her chamber music includes four works for piano trio, which have been performed by Concorde, the Fidelio Trio and the Vienna Mozart Trio and three string quartets performed by ConTempo, Quatuor Voce and Birds on a Wire quartets.

Her music has been featured at a number of Contemporary Music Festivals including New Music Dublin, Valentia Island Chamber Music Festival, Great Music in Irish Houses, Belfast Chamber Music Festival, *Donne in Musica* (Italy) and *Begegnungen* (Austria). Her work has been recorded on various compilation albums and a portrait CD of her chamber music, *A Different Game*, performed by The Fidelio Trio, was released in March 2017 on the Métier label.

Rhona Clarke is a member of *Aosdána*, Ireland's affiliation of creative artists.



Rhona Clarke



State Choir LATVIJA



Māris Sirmaiš

## THE CONDUCTOR

**Māris Sirmāis** is the Artistic Director of the State Choir LATVIA since 1997. An active supporter and developer of Latvian choral culture, he a charismatic conductor capable of inspiring both professional musicians and thousands of amateur singers at the National Song Festival. He is also noted as founder of one of the most important symbols of the Latvian choral culture, the Youth Choir *Kamēr...* . Along with his role as Associate Professor of Choir Conducting at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, Sirmāis is frequently invited to adjudicate at international choral and conducting competitions. He has participated in many prestigious festivals worldwide with the State Choir *LATVIA* and *Kamēr...* , where he also has given master-classes.

Recognized as a leading generator of ideas which result in triumphant projects, he is also an ardent Latvian patriot of wide international scope when it comes to his work. Having achieved a bachelor's and master's degree in choral conducting from Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, Sirmāis later pursued studies in orchestra conducting at the College of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, Austria. He has received many awards for choral conducting and for contribution to the international cultural reputation of Latvia. Amongst these awards is the Order of the Three Stars, Latvia's highest civilian honour, and membership of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. He has led concerts with the Berlin Radio Choir, MDR Leipzig Radio Choir, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, *ONE* Chamber Choir Singapore, Šiauliai State Chamber Choir *Polifonija* and many other choirs around the world. Sirmāis has also collaborated with such acclaimed soloists as Maxim Rysanov, Iveta Apkalna, Kristīne Blaumane, Egils Siliņš, Aleksandrs Antonenko, Julius Berger, Gidon Kremer, Nicolas Altstaedt, Douglas Webster, and others. He performs regularly with Latvian National Opera Orchestra, Liepāja Symphony Orchestra, *Sinfonietta Rīga*, *Kremerata Baltica*, Moscow chamber orchestra *Musica Viva*, Umeå Symphony Orchestra, and string orchestra *Helsinki Strings*.



## State Choir LATVIJA:

**The State Choir LATVIJA** is the largest professional choir in the Baltic States, and it is in regular demand for performances with the world's leading orchestras and conductors. The choir's artists are renowned for their musical intelligence and vocal skill, making this choir a unique instrument capable of performing everything from subtle *a cappella* works to dramatic vocal-symphonic masterworks.

With Māris Simmais as Artistic Director and Māris Ošlejs as General Manager since 1997, the choir has collaborated with world-renowned symphony orchestras including the *Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra*, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hamburg Philharmonic State Orchestra, the *Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen*, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, The Cadaqués Orchestra, The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, The Singapore Symphony Orchestra, and others. The State Choir LATVIJA has performed with such outstanding conductors as Mariss Jansons, Andris Nelsons, Zubin Mehta, Neeme Järvi, Jaap van Zweden, Paavo Järvi, Vladimir Ashkenazy, David Zinman, Valery Gergiev, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Simone Young, Tõnu Kaljuste, and others. These have included performances in such prestigious venues as the Elbphilharmonie, KKL Luzern, The Royal Concertgebouw, The National Music Auditorium Madrid, The Lincoln Centre, Shanghai Concert Hall, The Esplanade Singapore, and many others.

The State Choir LATVIJA is internationally acclaimed both for its academic excellence as well as its innovative projects. The choir has participated in recordings produced by *Naxos*, *Warner Brothers*, *Harmonia Mundi*, *Wergo* and *Ondine*, as well as numerous recording projects by both Latvian and foreign music publishers.

2022 will be the State Choir's LATVIJA 80th Anniversary year, while the International Sacred Music Festival, established by Māris Simmais and Māris Ošlejs, will be held for the 25th year. The festival has gained international recognition for the long-lasting tradition of premiering new compositions by contemporary composers as well as collaborating with the world renowned composers, such as Krzysztof Penderecki, Arvo Pärt, Giya Kancheli, John Tavener, Sofia Gubaidulina, Valentyin Silvestrov and John Rutter.

**Artistic Director: Māris Sirmais**

General Manager: Māris Ošlejs

Secretary General: Līga Štrausa

Project Manager: Maija Gredzena

**Sopranos:**

Marlēna Dravniece, Vita Grīnhofa, Inga Lisovska, Agita Meri, Māra Pilante,  
Indra Prince, Irīna Mihailovska, Nelli Sisojeva, Anete Viļuma, Marika Austruma,  
Ingrīda Klepere, Ina Jēkabsone, Eva Pērkone, Dita Tomsone

**Altos:**

Ilze Dzenīte, Inita Kamarūte, Zane Kažēna, Laila Lineja, Iveta Sevele, Daiga Visocka,  
Zane Zilberte, Daina Āboltiņa, Dace Bite, Inga Giluča, Lauma Malnace, Evita Taranda

**Tenors:**

Jurģis Liepnieks, Valdis Tomsons, Matīss Tučs, Guntars Vētra, Kristaps Nauzers,  
Reinis Sprūde, Ansis Bētiņš, Agnis Augustinovičs, Juris Jēkabsons, Kalvis Ozoliņš,  
Armands Šterns

**Basses:**

Eduards Fiskovičs, Ivars Rebhūns, Eduards Vācietis, Vilhelms Georgs Vācietis,  
Ralfs Šmidbergs, Ivars Krauze, Uģis Meņģelis, Jānis Petrovskis, Zigmārs Grasis,  
Agris Puķe, Uģis Matvejs

**Soloists:**

*Regina Caeli:* Dace Bite

*Pie Jesu:* Anete Viļuma

*In Paradisum:* Anete Viļuma, Marika Austruma;

*In Paradisom* (ending): Irīna Mihailovska, Dita Tomsone

*Lullay, My Liking:* Dita Tomsone, Inga Lisovska, Ina Jēkabsone

*The Kiss:* Dita Tomsone, Valdis Tomsons

*Do Not Stand at my Grave and Weep:* Irīna Mihailovska, Ansis Bētiņš

*The Old Woman:* Irīna Mihailovska, Dita Tomsone

Recorded at Riga St John's Church, Latvia in July 2021

Recorded, edited and mastered by Varis Kurmiņš

Executive Producer: Rhona Clarke

Design: Stephen Sutton (Divine Art)

Cover image: Drawing, 'Calling Out' by Marie Hanlon

Cover Photography: Gillian Buckley

Photo of State Choir LATVIJA (page 12): Juris Zigelis

Photo of State Choir LATVIJA (Page 23): Girts Ragelis

Photo of Māris Sirmāis: Girts Ragelis

Photo of Rhona Clarke: Marie Hanlon

Programme notes: Rhona Clarke

All works by Rhona Clarke available from The Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin except:  
'Glad and Blithe', 'Lullay My Liking', 'Make We Merry', *The Old Woman* and  
*Do Not Stand At My Grave and Weep* which are published by Cailínó Music Publishers.



'A Different Game': Piano Trios by Rhona Clarke

*The Fidelio Trio*

MSV 28561

"Six imaginative works... outstanding." – MusicWeb

Other works by Rhona Clarke from Métier on:

'Dancing in Daylight' (MSV 28556)

'I am Wind on Sea' (MSV 28558)

'Ghost Songs' (MSV 28599)

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