LUX AETERNA for chorus and chamber orchestra was composed for and is dedicated to the Los Angeles Master Chorale and its superb conductor, Paul Salamunovich, who gave the world premiere in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion on 13 April, 1997. Each of the five connected movements in this cycle contains references to Light assembled from various sacred Latin texts. The piece opens and closes with the beginning and ending of the Requiem Mass, with the central three movements drawn respectively from the Te Deum (including a line from the Beatus vir), O nata lux, and Veni, Sancte Spiritus.

The instrumental introduction to the Introitus softly recalls motivic fragments from two pieces especially close to my heart (my settings of Rilke’s ‘Contre qui, rose’ from Les chansons des roses and of O magnum mysterium), which recur throughout the work in various forms. Several new themes in the Introitus are then introduced by the chorus, including an extended canon on ‘et lux perpetua’. In te, Domine, speravi contains, among other musical elements, the cantus firmus ‘Herzliebster Jesu’ (from the Nuremberg Songbook, 1677) and a lengthy inverted canon on ‘Fiat misericordia’. O nata lux and Veni, Sancte Spiritus are paired songs, the former a central, a cappella motet and the latter a spirited, jubilant canticle. A quiet setting of the Agnus Dei precedes the final Lux aeterna, which reprises the opening section of the Introitus and concludes with a joyful Alleluia.

The chorus/organ version of Lux aeterna was jointly premiered the weekend of 26–27 April, 1997 in Portland by Oregon’s celebrated chamber chorus, Choral Cross-Ties, conducted by Bruce Browne, and by the Los Angeles Master Chorale at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. I would like especially to express my gratitude to organist James Paul Buonemani of St. James’ Episcopal Church, Los Angeles, for his invaluable assistance in realizing the organ score.

MORTEN LAURIDSEN
Composer-in-Residence, Los Angeles Master Chorale

ORCHESTRA

Flute
Oboe
 Clarinet in A
 Bassoon
 2 Horns in F
Bass Trombone
 or Trombone with F attachment

Strings

The string complement at the premiere performance for the 120-voice Los Angeles Master Chorale was 12-10-8-6-4. A reduced string section (10-8-6-5-3 or 8-6-5-4-2) may be used with smaller choruses.

Orchestral material available on hire from the publishers

Duration: c.27 minutes