

## Instrumentation

SATB

Organ (or piano)

*By-by, Lullaby, By-by* was first performed on 16 December 2023 at St Leonard's Church, Streatham by Streatham Choral and conducted by Calum Fraser. Duration c.5'15"

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## COMPOSER'S NOTE

For me, the most powerful image of the Christmas story is not the comet-like star, the three foreign potentates, the ox, the ass and the shepherds, memorable as they undoubtedly are. The farmyard scene was especially cherished by Franciscan friars in the 13th century, portraying in manger miniatures the birth of a child in Roman Palestine, over a thousand years before, as a scene any Umbrian country-dweller would instantly recognise. Instead of the rustic trappings of the winter manger, I prefer the simple icon of a young mother and her extremely vulnerable newborn baby, poor and far from home as the universal truth that survives the ages. It is also the part of the story that most attracted medieval poets and troubadours, as it happens, like the anonymous writer(s) of the chosen text of this, my new carol for Streatham Choral, *By-by Lullaby, by-by*. A substantial number of the oldest Christmas-themed hymns and poems are concerned only with Mary and her baby. Whilst priests may have asked their illiterate congregations to believe that this was a conception without the contribution hitherto provided by a human male, what all medieval people knew full well was that a successful birth of any kind was in itself a miracle, and had daily if not weekly reminders of how very miraculous it was, and still is, even in our age of hospitals and expert midwifery. They knew the desperate fragility of a newborn child and its mother, and the Church of the time offered them Jesus' mother as a symbol of veneration, giving iconography to their wonder at the priceless gift of motherhood. My musical setting of this 16th century text is intended to evoke warmth, calm, compassion and a profound parental love, with a series of overlapping sequences that ebb and flow between verse and refrain. Jeopardy, the cold world outside, and the daunting challenge ahead for the young mother are never too far away, though, as you may hear in the see-sawing deep chords that begin the piece. 'Then marvelled I right sore of this', the poet comments, a sense of wonder I hope I have somehow also captured in the work.

Howard Goodall

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**poco rall.**

child.\_\_\_\_ My child.\_\_\_\_

child.\_\_\_\_ My child.\_\_\_\_

child.\_\_\_\_ My child.\_\_\_\_

child. My child.

**poco rall.**

*pp*

100

**ppp**

My child."

My child."

My child."

My child."

*ppp*

*ppp*

42 *poco* *mp*

child. By - by, lul - la - by, by - by, by - by, lul - la - by,

child. By - by, lul - la - by, by - by, by - by, lul - la -

child. By - by, lul - la - by, by - by, by - by, lul - la -

child. By - by, lul - la - by, by - by, by - by, lul - la -

*mp*

46 *p*

“Rocked I my child, my child;

by, “Rocked I my child, my child;

by, “Rocked I my child, my child;

by, “Rocked I my child, my child;

*p*