

Composer's note

I have asked myself many times during the pandemic and its associated lockdowns what it is we composers offer the communities we serve that can be useful at a time of social trauma and distress. Musicians as a whole have been extraordinarily proactive in responding to people's isolation with virtual choirs, bands, tutorial resources, free performances, intimate streamed sessions from home, and much else besides, on the internet. Singers and players have been not twiddling their thumbs in the most imaginative and resourceful ways. For a composer, the task is a more reflective, internal one. What can we do that adds to the huge sum of music already out there?

One answer to this is music's relationship with memory. Hearing, unexpectedly, a song from one's youth randomly playing on a nearby radio can instantly, magically return one to a place, a moment, a feeling, a person, an atmosphere, as if the distance between now and then simply falls away. Even things we thought we had forgotten miraculously reappear, clear as day, as a fragment of familiar, distant melody punctures our current hurly-burly. There's a neurological reason for this, since the bit of our brain that handles memory and the bit that decodes music are nestled alongside each other.

The way music transports us backwards in time is different from, say, painting or photography. When we see a faded photograph of ourselves on a beach, aged 7, of course it summons the moment: but the photo is always that day – captured, frozen, locked down forever. When we hear a song that was what we danced to, aged 13, when we had our first kiss, the song is replayed, now, in real time, all over again. Yes, it's a recording, suspended in vinyl, or laser imprint, but the song is performed again, as if live, in forward motion. What's more, if the music is played by a living musician to us, in the room, it is reborn again from scratch, as new. It doesn't matter if the music was first written in 1710, 1810, 1910 or 2010. It is happening in our real-time present, vividly alive, and we are experiencing those feelings – and newer ones, overlaid – all at once. Music can evoke and preserve remembrance like no other form. Dido's lament, from Henry Purcell's 1688 opera *Dido and Aeneas*, soars to its tragic climax with the words, 'Remember me, remember me, but ah, forget my fate...' and because it is set to music of heart-breaking beauty, she is indeed remembered, as requested, 333 years later, and counting.

So when Simon Halsey, conductor of the London Symphony Chorus, wrote to me asking if there was something I could write for his exceptional choir that might provide them with a vocal response to the crisis, I asked if the LSC would consider a piece which would aim to memorialise the health workers who had lost their lives whilst saving those of others, during the pandemic. We would create an online, virtual version, for now, and then the work would expand to include the names of all the health and care workers who had died in the COVID-19 pandemic. I described it to Simon and the chorus' chair, Owen Hanmer, as an organic, living memorial version of the Menin Gate or the Thiépval Memorial on the Somme, where the names of thousands of fallen soldiers of the 1914-18 war are etched into their stone walls. Yet unlike a stone memorial, whose striking solemnity is unchanging, the choral work I have composed, *Never To Forget*, is designed to live on in performance after performance, an act of remembrance that looks backwards with respect, love and gratitude but that flows onwards, always evolving, in real time, in the present tense, indefinitely.

The names of those that have died are sung one after another, separately. The rhythmic shape of the melody line is entirely dictated by those names. We researched as conscientiously as we could correct pronunciations, without disturbing the families concerned at a time of deep private grief. We, as makers of music, offer to the friends, colleagues and families of the deceased something, we hope, from our hearts to theirs, to all those mourning health workers who have died since the pandemic began. I can think of no commission I have undertaken that had a more poignant, worthwhile reason to exist, to be added to the great sum of music already written, than *Never To Forget*, which will forever belong to the people whose sacrifice it honours.

For Simon Halsey and the London Symphony Chorus

NEVER TO FORGET

In honour of the UK health and care workers who lost their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic

Howard Goodall

♩ = 75

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

Piano (for rehearsal only)

pp

p

Red.

6

pp

[hard j]

Ma - moo - na Ra - na, — Poo - ja Shar - ma, Sa - mi Shou - sha,
 Mae - moo - na* Puh - ja Same - ey Shuh - sha

pp

El - ber - to Ri - co, —

* Transliterations are provided where helpful as a guide to pronunciation only

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Ma - ha - daye Jag - roop, O - ron - sa - ye Ok - ho - mi - na, Ab - dul -
 Ma - ha - day O - roh - sigh - yea Oc - ko - mi - na, Ab - duhl-

Ma - ha - daye Jag - roop, O - ron - sa - ye Ok - ho - mi - na, Ab - dul -
 Ma - ha - day O - roh - sigh - yea Oc - ko - mi - na, Ab - duhl-

Ma - ha - daye Jag - roop, O - ron - sa - ye Ok - ho - mi - na, Ab - dul -
 Ma - ha - day O - roh - sigh - yea Oc - ko - mi - na, Ab - duhl-

Ma - ha - daye Jag - roop, O - ron - sa - ye Ok - ho - mi - na,
 Ma - ha - day O - roh - sigh - yea Oc - ko - mi - na

mp

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Ra - zaq Ab - dul - lah, Bec - ky Re - gan,
 Ra - zack Ab - duhl - luh

p

Ra - zaq Ab - dul - lah, Mar - garet Waine, Jo - ey Ney - ra, He - len Mills, Er - win Span - na - gl,
 Ra - zack Ab - duhl - luh

p

Ra - zaq Ab - dul - lah, Jo - ey Ney - ra, He - len Mills, Er - win Span - na - gl,
 Ra - zack Ab - duhl - luh

p

Mar - garet Waine, Bec - ky Re - gan, Jo - ey Ney - ra, He - len Mills, Er - win Span - na - gl,

p