



VITA AETERNA

for choir and orchestra

Music by
PETER VANTINE

WORLD PREMIERE
Sunday, August 22, 2021

VITA AETERNA

("Eternal Life")

Music by Peter Vantine
b. 1967 (ASCAP)

- I. In the Beginning
- II. Kyrie
- III. Come Unto Me
- IV. Sanctus
- V. The Life
- VI. Lux Aeterna
- VII. Lord, Make Me an Instrument

Estimated Duration: 35 minutes
Completed: February 2020

INSTRUMENTATION

Soprano and tenor soloists, SATB divisi choir, flute/piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 3 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, strings, synthesizers/loops.

LIVE MUSICIANS

FLUTE

Bianca Garcia
Lindsey Sherman

OBOE

Danielle Kunis
Jim Sharrock

CLARINET/BASS CLARINET

Tristan J. Butler

HORN

Kathryn Denney
Patricia Lake
Robert Moffett
Emily Wiebe

TRUMPET

Brian Caissie
Paul Mason
Richard Shapiro
John Vetere

HARP

Liat Shapiro
Eleanor Turner

STRINGS

Naomi Shapiro (violin)
Dayla Dementjew (viola)
Kate Harris (cello)

PIANO/CONDUCTOR

Peter Vantine

SOLOISTS

Michelle Heinze, soprano
Michael Washington, tenor

CHOIR

SOPRANO

Rebecca Alvarez
Tiffany Baxter
Mair Bronwen
Karen Brown
Kathryn Denney
Sevan Dulgarian
Sheri Feyl
Arme Gallanaro
Michelle Heinze
Pam Hoeman
Mary Jean Jordan
Robin McCormack
Pam Mech
Ann Ralls
Alicia Reks
Kimberly Robertson
Julie Sullivan
Mary Toropov
Nina Walters
Lyndé Weston
Emily Wiebe
Dolores Young

ALTO

Kathy Arnold
Rosemary Aylward
Irene Bagdoian
Jan Barry
Brittany Betts
Wendy Betts
Carolyn Campbell
Emma Carlson
Rachel Cole
Sybil Coleman

Gail Dorey
Susan Dunbar
Nicole Eckerson
Cynthia Faulkner
Martha Florance
JoAnne Gray
Faith Hodgkins
Amy Lloyd
Pam Moline
Kristin Neprud
Linda Picceri
Carol Rathbun
Pamela Ray
Elizabeth Sarantos
Lindsey Sherman
Amy Stewart-Himes
Deborah Stolar
Laurie Vantine

TENOR

Nicholas Cotton
John Haddad
Ben Morse
Thom Stolar
Peter Vantine
John Vetere

BASS

Cedric Buettner
Mark Coleman
Peter Coleman
Lowell Dunfee
Andrew Gaydos
Joe Haddad
Don Hodgkins
Eric Lindahl
Michael John Trotta
Daniel Tuck
Meirwyn Walters

CONGREGATION (Mvt. 1 & 7)

Rosemary Aylward

Brittany Betts

Wendy Betts

Karen Brown

Mark Coleman

Sybil Coleman

Kathryn Denney

Lowel Dunfee

Samuel Durand

Bill Evans

Martha Florance

Glenn Gray

Joanne Gray

Mary Jean Jordan

David MacAdam

Paul Mason

Ben Morse

Pamela Ray

Lindsey Sherman

Terry Sherman

Dave Smith

Thom Stolar

Alan Tilton

Michael John Trotta

John Vetere

Emily Wiebe

Special thanks to all the musicians,
and those who supported this
project on Kickstarter, including:

Peter & Babette Antognoni

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Rachel & Jason Cole

Paul Cooke

Christopher Darke

Gail Dorey

Gary Finlayson

Martha Florance

Laura Gourgas

Glenn & JoAnn Gray

Bill Griebel

Susan Hersey

Simon & Jodi Jarvis

Janet & Alan Jeffery

Pete Jeffrey

Mary Jean Jordan

John Haddad

Gary & Judi Hoyt

Scott Kelley

Linda Kirk

Mike & Melinda Leone

Diane Lim

Tristan & Loren Lush

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Keith McCoy

Robert Mech

Simon Miner

Jane & Alan Moline

Stephanie Morin

Karen Nelson

Karen Otto

Christopher Palazini

Mark & Melissa Pellizzaro

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Tom & Carrie Stoner

Pamela Surette

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ABOUT THE PREMIERE

This performance was recorded *virtually* over a period of a year from July 2020 to July 2021 with Movements 1-6 having individual premieres during that time. The original intent for this cantata was to be a live presentation as a complete multi-movement work, so the final movement is being premiered within the context of the complete cantata. Nearly 100 singers and instrumentalists participated from across the globe, including Canada, Germany, Great Britain, The Netherlands, and the United States from coast to coast. Recording *virtually*, where each person sings or plays their part by themselves while listening to a guide recording, is not the ideal performance vehicle for a work of this scope. However, since it was the only option during a worldwide pandemic that witnessed the complete shutdown of live music opportunities, it also provided an unanticipated benefit of involving people that would not have been able to participate due to distance. So even while we were apart for so long, music still brought us together.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Peter Vantine has been writing, performing, and producing music professionally for over thirty years and holds degrees in music from Berklee College of Music and Boston University. He has devoted much of his life to honing his craft as a composer, arranger, and pianist. His music has been featured on the concert stage as well as in film, television and media, including The Biography Channel, The Discovery Channel, PBS, Warner Brothers Online, the Salem Wax Museum, and The Learning Company. He has produced over thirty music CDs—many of which include his own music—including a classical piano album aimed at raising awareness and funding for Alzheimer's research.

In 2014, Peter was nominated for Album of the Year by *Whisperings Solo Piano Radio*. He was also the grand prize recipient of the 2001 Turner Classic Movies *Young Composer's Competition* that led him to score and record over 70 minutes of orchestral music for the silent film *Camille* (1921 version). More recently, Peter arranged the music for two musical productions by David MacAdam—*Martin Luther: The Hammer and the Door* and *Esther: For Such a Time as This*. He also recorded a solo piano album trilogy titled *Notes of Comfort*, and created a musical website, *SalvationsWell.com*, showcasing his fervor for outer space and space music. While creating a sense of God's peace and comfort through music is a vital role for Peter, his most precious role is being a devoted husband and dad.

PROGRAM NOTES

Over the years I have seen first-hand how music has the power to heal, bridge the greatest of divides, and inspire hope in people from every walk of life. It has always been a goal of mine to create music that draws people into the Presence of God, whether it is solely through listening or actively participating in the music itself. This is a big part of why I became a composer, and why I wrote *Vita Aeterna* ("Eternal Life").

In 1989, a spark was ignited at a choral music conference in Florida. I was still in college and recently had begun my first church music ministry position. I was searching for God as well as my niche in the music world. The clinician selected Maurice Durufle's *Requiem* (meaning "rest") for us to sing with a full orchestra. It was an incredible musical and spiritual experience for me. Shortly after that conference, I immersed myself in choral repertoire. For some reason I kept coming back to the Requiem form, but my faith in Christ placed on my heart an understanding of "the great beyond" as not just being eternal rest, but eternal LIFE—and eventually discovering that this is something we can begin to experience even now just blew me away (see John 17:3)!

The combining of Latin and English texts was inspired by John Rutter's *Requiem*, while the arc of the cantata was loosely inspired by the Fibonacci sequence where in this case the climax occurs about two-thirds of the way through the work during the fifth movement. The "Sanctus" is typically where the climax occurs as a way of amplifying the concept of God's holiness. Yet in this work, I chose to score the Sanctus for a *cappella* choir to create a more ethereal sonic palette, where one might feel as though they are entering a sacred space—what I consider an "other worldly" moment.

The first movement opens with a chant-like figure as a primordial musical connection to the beginning of creation, yet quickly transitions to a more pastoral soprano solo section that reflects our response to the realization that God has included us in His design from the very beginning. This erupts into a joyous hymn praising God for choosing us even "before the creation of the world", while providing the "audience" an opportunity to worship in song along with the choir. (It was important to me to begin and end the cantata with a moment of corporate worship, employing a more traditional-type hymn in Movement 1 and a simple worship chorus in Movement 7.)

As a response to this amazing revelation, in Movement 2 one might find themselves grappling with unworthiness of the unconditional love God has demonstrated. The simple Latin prayer that has been echoed through the ages—“Lord, have mercy”—becomes humanity’s cry of hope. The use of a more contrapuntal approach juxtaposes the idea that we were united when praising God for His creation against the notion that in our weaknesses and imperfections we are scattered because of our own self-centered desires. Yet ultimately our common afflictions bring us together where we a great need for healing can be discovered.

All thoughts of inadequacy are dispelled in Movement 3 when an invitation is issued forth from Jesus Himself, to “come” just as we are (“all you who labor and are heavy laden”). The afflicted can indeed find comfort and consolation in His presence. In Him we find rest and peace. This loving act can open the hardest of hearts and lead one to another reaction of praise (Movement 4). Yet this time not for what God has done, but for who God IS—a holy, righteous, and loving God who fills “the heavens and earth with [His] glory”. The gradual crescendo throughout this movement blossoms into the ultimate outpouring of celebratory praise (Movement 5) as the choir sings “Ad vitam! To life!”. Not only is this a celebration of life freely given by the Creator, but it is a celebration of the One who IS LIFE!

After this joyous celebration, in the final two overlapping movements (6 & 7), a new understanding comes into focus of who God is and how His “eternal light” constantly shines on us and the lives we touch—how we are called to reflect His light to a darkened world. Our prayer boldly becomes, “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.”

One final note: I understand these texts, or this music for that matter, may not appeal to everyone. You may be in a place where you reject much of what is being sung about in this work. All I ask is that you give it a chance and perhaps you’ll find something that resonates with you, whether through the music, the visuals, or just the mere fact that so many people from around the world were compelled out of love to share their musical gifts in order to help realize this project. This is merely one person’s reflection on sacred and eternal matters, but my hope is that we’ll all agree that love, joy and peace are a better way to live—now while on this earth *and* forever more.

- Peter Vantine, August 2021

TEXT AND TRANSLATIONS

Mvt 1: In the Beginning

from the New Testament

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. (John 1:1-4, NIV)

With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure . . . to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. (Ephesians 1:8b-10, NIV)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. (Ephesians 1:3-4, NIV)

Mvt 2: Kyrie

from the Requiem Mass

Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Mvt 3: Come Unto Me

from the New Testament

Come unto Me,
all you who labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.
Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me,
for I am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.
(Matthew 11:28-30, New KJV)

Mvt 4: Sanctus

from the Requiem Mass

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et
terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit
in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

*Holy, holy, holy
Lord God of Sabaoth.
Filled are the heavens and
earth with Your glory.
Hosanna* in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna* in the highest.*

* "Hosanna" means *praise, adoration, joy*

Mvt 5: The Life

from the New Testament and Latin text adapted by the composer

Ad vitam! Ad vitam! Ad vitam! *To life! To life! To life!*

I am the resurrection and the life.
He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.
And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.
(John 11:25-26, New KJV)

Jesu resurrectio et vita *Jesus is the resurrection and the Life!*
Sit resurrectio et vita *He is the resurrection and the Life!*
Credimus! Credimus! Credimus! *We believe! We believe! We believe!*

I am the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6, NIV)

Ad vitam! Ad vitam! Ad vitam! *To life! To life! To life!*

Mvt 6: Lux Aeterna

from the Requiem Mass

Lux aeterna luceat nobis, Domine, *May eternal light shine on us, Lord,*
cum sanctis tuis in aeternam, *with Thy saints everlasting,*
quia pius es. *because You are merciful.*
Vita aeterna, dona nobis, Domine, *Eternal life, grant us, Lord,*
et lux perpetua luceat omnibus. *and may perpetual light shine on us all.*

Mvt 7: Lord, Make Me an Instrument

Anonymous (mis-attributed to St. Francis of Assisi)

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may seek
not so much to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

The album recording of **VITA AETERNA**
will be released on September 22, 2021.

For more information and samples of Peter's music, visit

PeterVantine.com
NotesOfComfort.com
SalvationsWell.com

Subscribe to Peter's YouTube channel
to receive notice of future premieres like this.