Songs from the End of the World

(2015)

I. A long time alone
   II. Raveling
   III. At sea

John Mackey

text by A. E. Jaques

Commissioned by
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Arizona State University
Eastman School of Music
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Consortium organized by University of North Carolina at Greensboro, John R Locke & Kevin Geraldi, Directors

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Instrumentation

Flute
Alto Flute (doubling on C flute)
Oboe
English horn
2 Clarinets in Bb
2 Bass Clarinets
Contrabass Clarinet (Bb)
2 Bassoons

Double Bass

Soprano

Harp

Piano

3 Percussionists (marimba, vibraphone, bass drum, and suspended cymbal)
Songs from the End of the World

text by A. E. Jaques

I. A long time alone

Dawn draws her rose-red fingers soft across the sleeping sky.
Another day unasked-for, light pinking flesh untouched.

Long ago I loved to watch the water wake
when first rays raced the waves.
Morning warm-born in a moment.

But the sweetest second sours in solitude.
Forever is a long time alone.

Summer murmurs memory of seasons sweet with cypress.
Seabirds basking idle as the fishes dare to doze.

I used to sing with the insects
answering slee slee whirrups with trilling airs.
But that was years ago,
before the buzzing buried cicada sounds inside
to rattle in the cluttered attic of never-spoken thoughts.

Even lovely liquid languor spoils.
Forever is a long time alone.

Wade into the wine-dark sea and leave the lonely island;
let salt swamp tears.
Waters hold you for a while.

Skin gleams warm. Long-fallow flesh awakens
but the ocean's kiss consumes.
Soon there is no woman—only wave.

So the body brought back rushes out again,
tide and time-taken as all things are.
The sea is not a solace but a cell.

Forever is a long time alone.

II. Raveling

When I found you, or you found me,
both of us lost in the endless sea,
then I healed you, and you healed me,
two tattered souls stitched up lovingly.

Seven summers of sun,
seven winters of wanting,
seven springtimes as new as the dawn,
seven autumns of falling
deeper into your breath—
seven years you are warp to my weft.

Only now is this paradise paradise.
Only now is this living a life.
Only now is there greenness and sweetness and air—
lost and found ones, we two, what a pair.

As I lose you, and so lose me,
finding I never had what I thought was free—
how can you take what once you gave?
I asked only love for the life I saved.

Seven years you were warp to my weft.
Seven years, yet you leave me bereft.
Seven years and I have nothing left.

You and I, we were bound up together.
You and I wove a heaven from scars.
You and I turned the darkness and lostness and pain
into something worth living again.

Only you made this paradise paradise;
Only you made this living a life;
Only you gave me greenness and sweetness and air—
All unraveling now, past repair.
III. At sea

Again, alone.
Again, forever.
Solitude and I, once more, together.

And now—forget?
Or yet remember?
If I hold fast will I still surrender?

Shall I cling to memory, and polish thoughts like bright stones?
But every touch erodes them; to love their light is to lose it.
Remembering. Dismembering.

Forget, then.
Forget him.

Forget him.
Forget, yes.

And cast away the empty oyster shell.
Tide take him.
But watch—who knows what waters wash home?

Forget him?
Forget, how?

This cruel moon brings ghosts in waves now, to haunt me.
Too-cruel moon brings ghosts to haunt me, to taunt me now.
This tide that gives and takes and tolls the time,
the time, the long and longing time alone.

I can't forget;
I can't remember.
The loss remains, so hard, so tender.

And all my rhymes are ravings,
my words the wailing of a lost one,
storm-tossed one.

The sea won't hear.
The sky won't care.
No different to them,
my silence or song.

No words, so.
Unheard, so.

Why go on then?
Why cry this silence?

Alone.
Alone.

All cast away now.
Just ghosts to stay now.
Alone, all lost at sea.
Program Note

The cycle is inspired by a passage in the Odyssey in which Odysseus, shipwrecked and near death, washes up on the shore of an island belonging to the nymph Kalypso. Homer’s telling treats the ensuing interlude as just another bit of exotic travelogue, one of many adventures on Odysseus’ long journey home; these three songs imagine what it meant to Kalypso herself, and are sung in her voice.

i. A long time alone
Kalypso’s island home is beautiful beyond imagining but remote beyond reach. Her immortality is thus an eternal solitude. The first song in the cycle, set before Odysseus’ arrival, is her lament of this loneliness. Standing on her shore, she remembers long-gone days when she could still delight in her paradise, and tells of the slow erosion of sensation and even sense after endless ages alone.

ii. Raveling
The second movement begins after Odysseus has been with Kalypso for seven years. She sings as she moves back and forth with a golden shuttle at her loom, weaving a tapestry—the work of all that time—that tells their story. At one end, the luminous threads show the near-dead castaway washed ashore; nearby the nymph nurses him back to health. Flowers and fruit, ripe and radiant, tumble through images of the love they found together. But the simple happiness of the scene and the song curdles: Odysseus wants to return to his home, leaving Kalypso to her solitude; nothing she has given or can give means anything to him anymore. She is shattered, but he is cold. So Kalypso returns to her loom, singing again, but now unraveling the tapestry, unmaking the document of love.

iii. At sea
In the final song, Kalypso watches Odysseus sail away on a boat she has given him, born by a breeze she has called up to fill a sail she has fashioned from the unmade tapestry. Waves carry him toward the horizon, and her loneliness washes in again.

- program note by A. E. Jaques  (please credit A. E. Jaques when reproducing program note)

World premiere November 19, 2015, with Lindsay Kesselman, soprano, and the University of North Carolina Greensboro Wind Ensemble, conducted by Kevin Geraldi.
for Lindsay Kesselman

Songs from the End of the World

I. A long time alone

Flute
Alto Flute
Oboe
English Horn
B♭ Clarinet 1
B♭ Clarinet 2
Bass Clarinet 1
Bass Clarinet 2
Contrabass Clarinet
Bassoon 1
Bassoon 2
Double Bass
Soprano
Harp
Piano
Vibraphone
Marimba
Large Bass Drum

\( q. = 46 \), flowing, very freely

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rose red fingers soft across the sleeping sky
Another day un-
loved to watch the water wake when first rays raced the waves.
Morning warm born in a moment.
very freely

For-ev-er is a long time— a long time—a lone
\( \text{\textdagger} = 46, \text{flowing, very freely} \)

Fl.

A. Fl.

Ob.

Eng. Hrn.

Clar. 1

Clar. 2

B. Cl. 1

Bs. Cl. 2

Cb. Cl.

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

dB.

Sop.

Hpt.

Pro.

Vibes

Mrb.

BD

\( \text{\textdagger} \text{\textdagger} = 46, \text{flowing, very freely} \)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fl.</td>
<td>pp</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. Fl.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ob.</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Eng. Hrn.</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clar. 1</td>
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<td>Clar. 2</td>
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<td>B. Cl. 1</td>
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<td>Bsn. 1</td>
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<td>Vibes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrb.</td>
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**Translation:**

Sea-sons sweet with cy-press.

Sea-birds bask-ing id-le as the fishes dare to doze.
I used to sing with the insects answering their whirrups with trilling airs but that was long ago.

\( \text{Fl.} \quad \text{A. Fl.} \quad \text{Ob.} \quad \text{Eng. Hrn.} \quad \text{Clar. 1} \quad \text{Clar. 2} \quad \text{B. Cl. 1} \quad \text{Bs. Cl. 2} \quad \text{Cb. Cl.} \quad \text{Bsn. 1} \quad \text{Bsn. 2} \quad \text{D.B.} \quad \text{Sop.} \quad \text{Hp.} \quad \text{Pno.} \quad \text{Mrb.} \quad \text{Vibes} \quad \text{BD} \)
a tempo

before the buzzing bur-ied no once da sounds in-side to rat-tle in the clut-tered att-ic of nev-er-spo-ken a tempo
ever is a long time a long time For ever is a long time a long time.

poco a poco rit.

allarg.
switch to alto flute
Wade in to the wine-dark sea and leave the lonely island;
for perusal use only
Skin gleams warm; long lashes lift a-wa-kens but the ocean’s kiss consumes...
Soon there is no man only wave?
So the boy brought back rushes out again.
a little slower  
a tempo, rit.

a little slower  
a tempo, rit.
very freely

For-ev-er is a long time

very freely

For-ev-er is a long time and a long time and a-lone
When I found you, or you found me, both of us lost in the

pedal liberally throughout

motor off
for perusal use only
for perusal use only
Ah, seven summers of sun, seven winters of wanting, seven
poco rit.  a tempo

Se you are warp to my well.

for perusal use only
now is this paradise. — Only now is this living a

— 60 circa, freely
sweetness and air. Lost and found ones, we two, what a poco rit.
Fl.
A. Fl.
Ob.
Eng. Hrn.
Clar. 1
Clar. 2
B. Cl. 1
Bb. Cl. 2
Cb. Cl.
Bsn.
Bsn. 2
D.B.
Sop.
Hph.
Pro.
Vibes
Mrb.
BD

thought was free

how can you take what
Fl.
A. Fl.
Ob.
Eng. Hrn.
Clar. 1
Clar. 2
B. Cl. 1
Bs. Cl. 2
Cb. Cl.
Bsn.
Bsn. 2
D.B.
Sop.
Hyp.
Pno.
Vibes
Mrb.
BD

Once you gave? I asked only love for the life
years you were warp to my well. Seven years, yet you leave me he -
years and I have nothing
I, we were bound up to—gather—er You and I wove a heaven from
scars. You and I turned the darkness and lost-ness and pain
slower, \( \frac{3}{4} \) 52 circa, still free

in to something worth living again Only

motor on, slow

for perusal use only
you gave me greeness and sweetness and
air All unraveling nose, past re-
\[ \text{Fl.} \]
\[ \text{A. Fl.} \]
\[ \text{Ob.} \]
\[ \text{Eng. Hrn.} \]
\[ \text{Clar. 1} \]
\[ \text{Clar. 2} \]
\[ \text{B. Cl. 1} \]
\[ \text{Bsn. 2} \]
\[ \text{Bsn.} \]
\[ \text{Hrns.} \]
\[ \text{Bsn.} \]
\[ \text{Sop.} \]
\[ \text{D.B.} \]
\[ \text{Hp.} \]
\[ \text{Pno.} \]
\[ \text{Vibes} \]
\[ \text{Msb.} \]
\[ \text{BD} \]

\[ \text{\( \frac{3}{4} \) \( \frac{5}{4} \)} \]
\[ \text{\( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \frac{5}{4} \)} \]
Flute
Alto Flute
Oboe
English Horn
B♭ Clarinet 1
B♭ Clarinet 2
Bass Clarinet 1
Bass Clarinet 2
Contrabass Clarinet
Bassoon 1
Bassoon 2
Double Bass
Soprano
Harp
Piano
Vibraphone
Marimba
Large Bass Drum

Flute
Alto Flute
Oboe
English Horn
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Bass Clarinet 2
Contrabass Clarinet
Bassoon 1
Bassoon 2
Double Bass
Soprano
Harp
Piano
Vibraphone
Marimba
Large Bass Drum

\( \frac{1}{2} \) = 52, rubato

III. At Sea

\( \frac{1}{2} \) = 52

A - a - lone. A-gain, for-ev-er. Sol-i-tude and I, once more, to -

motor on, slow

for perusal use only
gather. And now for - get? Or yet re - member? If I hold fast will I still sur - ren - der? Shall I cling to mem -

with a little more motion

for perusal use only
for perusal use only
For perusal use only
Forgo him? Forget, how? This cruel moon brings...
ghosts in waves now, to haunt me. Too cruel, moon brings
to haunt me, now
This tide the wave and takes and tolls the time, the time, the long and long-ing time a -
can't re-member. The loss remains, so
Fl.

A. Fl.

Ob.

Eng. Hrn.

Clar. 1

Clar. 2

B. Cl. 1

Bs. Cl. 2

Cb. Cl.

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

D.B.

Sop.

Hn.

Pno.

Vibes

Mtb.

BD

the wailing of a lost one, storm -

poco a poco accel.

release una corda pedal
allarg.

D.B.

Sop.

Hn.

Pro.

Vibes

Mtb.

BD

The sea won't care. The sky won't care.
No different to them, my silence or song. No words, so. Unheard, so.
Why go on then?
Why cry this

\[
\begin{align*}
q &= \frac{72}{60}, \text{ rubato} \\
\end{align*}
\]
Just ghosts to stay there, all lost at...
\( \text{for perusal use only} \)