Instrumentation

The accompaniment to this work exists in two versions:

1. For piano four-hands

The pianists play from the vocal score.

2. For full orchestra

3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo)
2 oboes
2 clarinets in A
2 bassoons
4 horns in F
2 trumpets in C
2 trombones
bass trombone
timpani (optional)
percussion 1—suspended cymbal, bass drum, chimes, glockenspiel
percussion 2—xylophone, vibraphone
harp
celeste (or keyboard)
piano
organ (if no trumpets and trombones)
strings

Full scores and instrumental parts are available on hire/rental from the publisher’s Hire Library or appropriate agent.

The Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square have recorded this piece with orchestral accompaniment on the CD Tree of Life: Sacred Music of Mack Wilberg (SKU 5198840).

Composer’s note

A Cloud of Witnesses weaves multiple witnessing stories of Christ’s Resurrection into a single tapestry. Drawing on accounts from all four Gospel writers and the opening of the Acts of the Apostles, I have tried to convey something of the momentum of overlapping, successive stories and the breathless astonishment among Christ’s followers as the reality of the Resurrection becomes clear.

To create a more panoramic and universal perspective, the piece avoids the use of soloists. Where the choir narrates the action, listeners sense that each event is a facet of a broader, more brilliant whole. And where the choir represents major characters, the audience recognizes that every ‘actor’ is less anachronistic and more symbolic of all human experience.

In scriptural witnessing stories, there is a clear distinction between visual recognition and spiritual understanding—between seeing and believing—a distinction that demarcates sacred and secular
interpretations of the events. Throughout the work, this difference is represented musically by chant-like accounts of physical 'seeing', interspersed with more contrapuntally enriched moments as Christ's disciples come to a deeper spiritual understanding.

As one would expect, the simple, tightly circumscribed melodies of the narrative tend to be more declamatory. By contrast, the polyphonic responses—alleluias, spiritual awakenings, and Christ's own injunctions—naturally inform, enrich, and elaborate upon the narrative facts. By design, these contrapuntal nodes cluster around small, close groups of pitches, creating harmonic 'clouds' as each individual account lends form and strength to the developing 'cloud of witnesses' (a metaphor borrowed from Hebrews 12:1).

Conveying this 'cloud' in just over twenty minutes allows listeners to grasp the scope and sweep of this revelatory period. After a short instrumental dawn, the women at the empty tomb enquire frantically, 'Never shall we see him?'. Then, as the chronicle comes to an end, Christ repeats his own promise that he will continually be with those who believe. As the first words of the work are a repetition of the fear-filled 'never', the conclusion is a gentle, comforting, everlastingly sustained 'alway'.

Duration: 22 minutes

This note and the text may be reproduced as required for programme notes.

Text

The Women
Never, never shall we see him?
Never resting in his tomb?
Never, never to anoint him?
Never free of grief and gloom?
Peter, angels saw us frightened,
Knew we sought him crucified.
John, they told us, “He is risen!
Come and see where he once lay.
Go and tell he’s gone before you,
Gone to Galilee this day!”

Then, how they ran—
Peter the Rock and John, beloved one—
Certain to find his body still entombed within,
John stooping down and Peter striding in.

Peter and John
Here are the linen clothes.
Here is the napkin folded, neatly laid.

What kind of thieves would here be duly staid
To loose this covering from his head,
And set it soft below?

Still, they saw with their eyes alone,
Doubting that he had risen,
Held captive by dread that they could be imprisoned;
They wept in each other’s arms
And grieved the hour,
And mourned the day,
And rent their hearts,
And ran away.

For they knew not the scripture
That Christ must rise again.

Then Mary of Magdala
Looked into the sepulchre weeping
And saw there two angels,
As seraphim o’er the ark reaching,
Or sentinels at an empty well,
Or vessels of truth only heaven can truly tell.

_The Angels_
Woman, why do you weep?

_Mary Magdalene_
Because they have taken my Lord,
And I know not where to find him.

And turning round,
She saw a lowly gardener
Who asked the selfsame question:

_The Savior_
Woman, why do you weep?
Whom do you seek?

_Mary Magdalene_
If you’ve taken my Lord
(If you’ve hidden his body),
Where can he be found?
(For if he arises as Lazarus,
He’ll come forth among wicked men
Without a friend.)

_The Savior_
Mary!

_Mary Magdalene_
Master!

And she reached out her hand,
Desiring to be nearer.

_The Savior_
Restrain me not, for I have not ascended
Into my Father’s presence,
But go and tell my brethren I first ascend
to him—
To my God and your God—
The Father of us one and all.

Then ponder on this witness,
This precious reminiscence:
That she who first perceived him
By hope and believing,
Received him in her grieving,

And in our sorrow we will see him
Soon appear!

Then she ran back,
Breathless, telling them
How her night of mourning
Became her joy in the morning.
Ashes to ashes—
Beauty for ashes!
But these were idle tales to those who
doubted.

When James’s mother went—Mary—
And Salome and the women,
They saw two angels sitting,
Waiting to lift the burden of their fear.

_The Angels_
Why are you here?
Why are you seeking him, grieving?
Why look for life where death its spoils is
keeping?
Come see where he was sleeping,
Then go and tell he has risen,
And waits where his first draught of fish
was given.

As the women ran to tell,
Christ greeted them with ‘All hail’.
And bowing down, they worshipped him with
joy!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

That day,
As two disciples left Jerusalem
In flight to the village of Emmaus,
A fellow traveler joined them by the way,
Imploring, ‘Why do you walk along this road
so sad?’

And they marveled that he was unaware.

_The Two Disciples_
Have you not heard that Christ
Has been condemned and crucified?
We trusted he was the one who would
redeem all Israel.
But thieves did steal his body,
And women speak of angels!
And seeing none of it with our eyes
Can we believe it’s true?
Good man, then what can we do but weep
And sorrow through and through?

_The Savior_
O ye foolish, tender children,
How slow in your hearts to believe
What prophets foretold
From Moses till now—
Remember all the scriptures saying
One should suffer even death for you!

And they drew nigh to the village,
Pleading for the stranger to tarry:

_The Two Disciples_
Abide with us, 'tis eventide.

And so they sat at meat, all three together.
And when he took the bread and broke it,
Even the bread of his affliction,
And he blessed and freely
Gave it unto them,
Their hearts beheld that it was Jesus—
Saw him, felt him, knew him,
And he quickly vanished!

_The Two Disciples_
Then it was him!
Our Lord and Master!
Jesus, Savior, our Redeemer!
Were our hearts not burning,
Souls not yearning,
Though our eyes were not discerning
Of him?

And leaving the village,
That very hour returning
To where the eleven were gathered, meeting,
These two told what had happened—
How first they misperceived him,
But breaking bread, they knew him,
And knowing, then could not see him.
Marveling thus with soft hearts opened,
Christ came among them.

_The Savior_
Peace be unto you.
My peace I give unto you.

Still they were all affrighted—
They thought they'd seen a ghost!
And trusting not their hearts
But eyes instead,
They yet believed but
Not for joy.

Thus, in their fearing,
The memories of his being
Were hidden from them,
And withered in them,
Until they heard him saying:

_The Savior_
Why are ye troubled?
What thoughts arise in your hearts?
Behold my hands,
Behold my feet,
For spirits have not this flesh—
This bone that ye see and feel me have.

Then he ate of fish before them,
Rehearsed the words of the prophets,
And calling them forth to tender his wounds,
He readied them to hear his sweet command:

_The Savior_
Be ye witnesses of these things!
And as God my Father sent me,
So peacefully do I send thee,
And bless thee,
And breathe on thee and say:
Receive the Holy Ghost!

But Thomas disbelieved,
For he saw not.
And since he had not beheld Christ,
What witness could he then bear?
And eight days hence, to him and more
Christ came:

_The Savior_
Peace be unto you.
My peace I give unto you.
Arise, come forth—
Come, Thomas, see
And feel my wounds for thee.
And reaching, Thomas witnessed,
And heard the call,

The Savior
Be not faithless but believing.

And feeling, believing, Thomas cried,

Thomas
My Lord, my God!

Away to Galilee
The erstwhile fishermen hurried,
But all night caught nothing
Until Christ called to them, ‘Children!’
Then drawing in their nets
A draught was given
Which they did bring before
Their risen Lord.

The Savior
Peter, lovest thou me?

Their Master asked.

Peter
Yea, Lord, I do!

And three times Peter reassured,

Peter
Thou knowest I do!
Thou knowest I do!
Thou knowest I do!

Then came the Savior’s plea:

The Savior
Go feed my lambs,
Go feed my sheep!

And at his call unto the mountain top
They gathered, some to worship, some yet
doubting,
With this question in their hearts:

The Apostles
Is it time?
Wilt thou now restore thy kingdom unto
us—
To all the House of Israel?
Is it time?

The Savior
It is not for you to know what God has
put—
Has kept—within his holy power.
Fear ye not!
Ye shall yet receive his power
When soon the Holy Ghost shall come
upon you.
Then, preach my word!
Be a witness unto me in all the world!

And thus he vanished from the sight
Of their eyes,
In a cloud.
Yet still they did yearn to see
Till two angels asked,

The Angels
Why gaze up and grieve?
For your Lord and Master soon will come
As you have seen him go!

Then be ye witnesses!
A cloud of witnesses,
Who feel and know and sing
Of Christ who rose to walk with us,
To heal and comfort us,
Renew and ransom us,
Till by his grace we rise
And run with joy this blessed race,
At last to see his face!

O may our hearts receive
And evermore believe
His promise sure,
‘Lo, I am with you alway’.

David Warner
Based on the Gospels and Acts 1,
King James Version
for The Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square

A Cloud of Witnesses

David Warner
(based on the Gospels and Acts 1)

MACK WILBERG

Slowly $\dot{j} = 50$

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

PRIMO

SECONDO

Slowly $\dot{j} = 50$

moving ahead

Ped.
slightly faster $\frac{d}{T} = 56$

moving ahead

slightly faster $\frac{d}{T} = 66$

moving ahead

slightly faster $\frac{d}{T} = 76$

moving ahead
slightly faster $\text{j} = 96$

(The Women)

SOPRANO 2 $\text{ff with agitation}$

in his tomb?

ALTO 1 $\text{ff with agitation}$

'shall we see him?'

Ne-ver,

ALTO 2 $\text{ff with agitation}$

'Ne-ver, ne-ver

Ne-ver rest-ing,
Pe-ter, an-gels

Ne-ver free of
grief and gloom?

to anoint him?
saw us

He is ris-en!
cru-ci-fied.

Knew we sought him

"Come and
fright-ened,
John, they told us,

"They said, John, look!"
Go and tell he's gone before you, 
see where gone before you, 
“He once lay. Go and tell he's 
fore you, to Galilee. 
he is gone to Galilee. 
gone to Galilee. 
With marked rhythm and articulation

With marked rhythm and articulation

Ped.
Gone!  Gone!  Gone to Galilee this day!

Gone!  Gone!  Gone to Galilee this day!

ff poco marc.
Then, how they ran— Pe-ter the Rock and

John, be-loved one— Cer-tain to find his bo-dy still en-tombed with —
in, John stooping down and Peter striding in.

(Peter and John)

Here are the linen clothes. Here is the napkin.
fold-ed, neat-ly laid. What kind of thieves would here be du-ly staid. To

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