# **EDMUND HUNT**

# VITA HOMINUM

## FOR CHOIR

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(2018)

Texts taken from writings by the Venerable Bede and from the Latin Mass

#### Vita Hominum

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#### Order of movements

*Vita hominum* is designed to be performed without a break between movements, but individual movements may be performed separately if required.

To perform movement 3 as a separate piece, begin on bar 2 (after the double barline), and end with a fermata on the final bar (soprano 2, alto 2, tenor 2 and bass 2).

#### **Acknowledgements**

This work was developed for The Singers as part of the Adopt A Composer scheme, funded by the PRS for Music Foundation and the Philip and Dorothy Green Music Trust, and run by Making Music, in partnership with Sound and Music and BBC radio 3.

Grateful thanks go to Donald and The Singers for their feedback and suggestions throughout the composition process, to Steve and Lindsey for their hospitality, to Chris and Gaby for their Latin language advice, to Fraser and Sally, and to all whose help and encouragement helped the piece to come to fruition.

#### First performance

*Vita Hominum* was premiered by The Singers in St George's Church, Jesmond on the 15th of December, 2018.

#### **Duration**

Approximately 18 minutes

#### **Choir specifications**

The piece is for SSAATTBB, with at least one soprano soloist and a tenor soloist.

**Texts** 

#### 1. Ita haec vita hominum

- "...Ita haec vita hominum ad modicum apparet: quid autem sequatur, quidve praecesserit, prorsus ignoramus."
- "... Thus this life of man appears for a short while: but what follows, or what went before, we know not at all "

From the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People (Book II, chapter 13)* comparing life to a sparrow flitting into a Banqueting Hall for a few seconds to escape the storm outside before flitting back out again.

'Interea quia fragilis est et more freti volubilis omnis saeculi status, instante subito turbine...'

Meanwhile, since the condition of every generation of man is fragile and whirling like the waves, when suddenly a storm arises...'

From the Venerable Bede's *Prose Life of St Cuthbert (chapter 8)* 

#### 2. Tempestas

'Scio...quia, ubi navem ascenderitis, tempestas vobis et ventus contrarius superveniet; sed tu memento, ut hoc oleum, quod tibi do, mittas in mare; et statim, quiescentibus ventis, serenitas maris vos laeta prosequetur, ac cupito itinere domum remittet.'

'I know that when you board the ship, a contrary wind and storms will come upon you, but you must remember to pour this oil, which I give to you, upon the sea; and, at once, as the winds quieten, a pleasant, calm sea will follow you and send you home the way you desire'

From the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People (Book III, chapter 15)*.

#### 3. Christus est stella matutina

Christus est stella matutina, Qui nocte saeculi transacta, Lucem vitae sanctis promittit, Et pandit aeternam

Christ is the morning star, Who, when the night of this world has passed, Promises to his saints the light of life, And lays it open eternally

From the Venerable Bede's *Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, quoted above his tomb in Durham Cathedral.

#### 4. Deo gratias: ite in pace

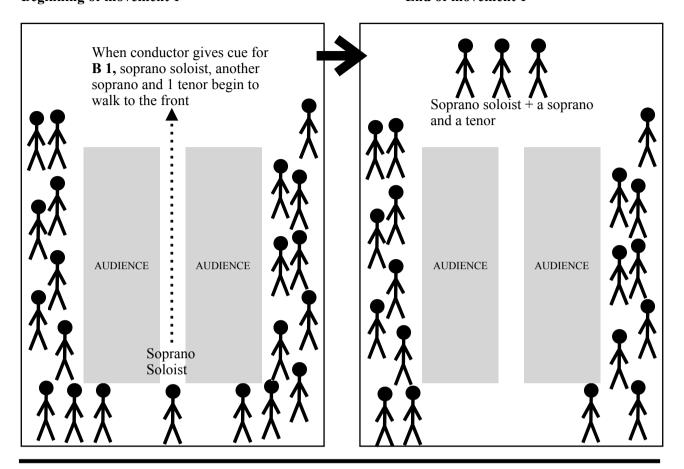
Deo gratias: ite in pace

Thanks be to God. Go in peace.

Translated by Mr. Christopher L. Hunwick and Gabriele Wright

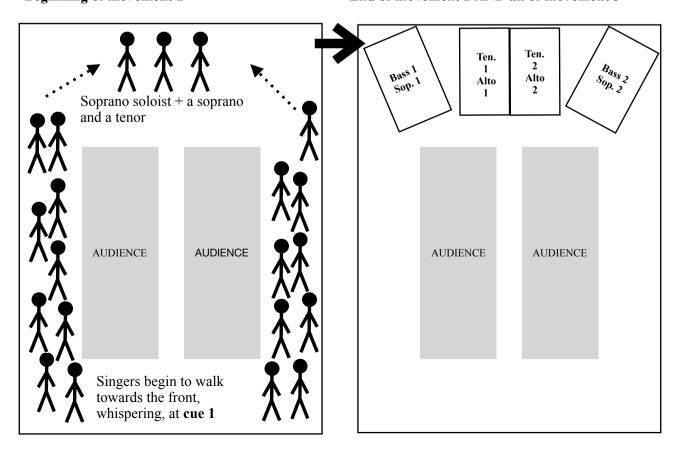
# Staging diagrams 1.Ita haec vita hominum Beginning of movement 1

#### **End of movement 1**



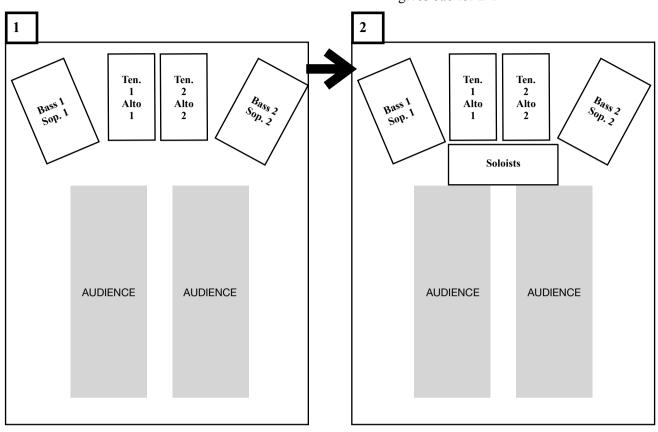
# **2. Tempestas** Beginning of movement 2

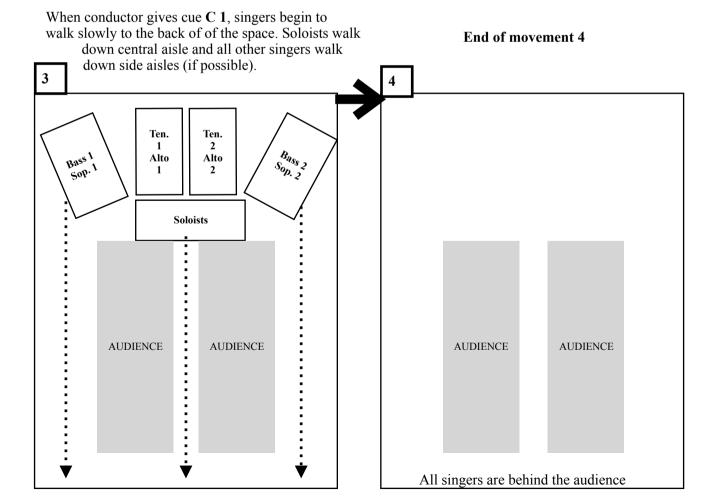
#### End of movement 2 AND all of movement 3



# 4. Ite in pace Beginning of movement 4

Soprano, alto, tenor and bass soloists move to stand in front of the audience after conductor gives cue for **B 1** 





#### Notation conventions



Vertical dotted lines ending in an arrow show where a particular voice starts or stops.

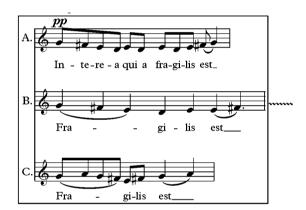
Breves do not last for a specified number of beats. They end either with a cue from the conductor (shown by a vertical dotted line, as above), or by voices fading out independently (as on page 2).

A

Each new section is shown by a letter in a square box.

Conductor's cues are shown by boxed numbers. Cues are clearest if the conductor shows the number with fingers or a card.

Gradual change of vocal production (e.g. from humming to open mouth, on p.2)



Boxed material (movements 1 and 4, all voices):

Individual singers choose an order (ABC, ACB, BAC, BCA, CAB or CBA), independent of neighbouring voices. Voices should sing through the phrases continuously, in the chosen order, taking a breath (thus adding rests) at the end of a phrase where necessary. Voices will not be in time with each other (although occasional synchronisation may sometimes occur by chance). The tempo should be the same as the metronome mark at the start of the movement for all the

repeated material. Singers should repeat phases continuously (represented by the horizontal trill line) until the conductor gives the cue for the next box of material. Each voice should sing independently, without trying to sing in unison with anyone else.



Triangular noteheads represent a high note of any pitch (ideally as high as possible).

'ng' represents a hum with an open mouth.



Brackets show the approximate time in seconds between the conductor's cues. Timings are only a guide; the conductor may vary these timings depending on factors such as the number of singers and size of performance space.

#### Performance instructions

#### Ita haec vita hominum

#### Staging:

Opening position: Singers encircle the audience (if possible), with each singer standing next to someone who signs a different part. The soprano soloist stands behind the audience. At figure B1, the soprano soloist begins to walk down the central aisle, joined by another soprano and a tenor, to reach the stage area before figure C. The three soloists stop singing the boxed material at any point from B1 (to allow themselves enough time to find the starting note for figure C).

#### Performance:

Boxed material: From figure A1 to A4, one or two voices (decided beforehand) enter with conductor's cue. All other voices join in during the following 5-10 seconds after the conductor's cue.

When the conductor signals for singers to move to the next box of repeated material (from figure B), singers should complete whichever phrase they are singing before moving to the new box.

At figure C, the conductor leads the soloists. At the conductor's cue 5, the choir (excluding soloists) sing to the end of whichever phase they are singing and sustain the final note of the phrase (shown in brackets).

Continue without a break into movement 2

#### **Tempestas**

#### Staging:

Singers remain in the same positions that were reached at the end of movement 1. The three soloists are at the front of the stage area, and other singers are spread out around the performance space.

At cue 1, singers (not including the three soloists, who are already at the front) begin to move to the stage area, forming into three groups. Choir I (first sopranos and first basses) assemble to the conductor's left. Choir II (second sopranos and second basses) assemble to the conductor's right. Altos and tenors assemble in the middle of the stage, between the two choirs.

If necessary, alto 1/tenor 1 and alto 2/tenor 2 might need to move slightly closer to choir I/choir II before the start of movement 3, to help the ensemble to stay together during movement 3 (when the choir is divided into 2 groups). Any readjustment on stage is probably best during the fermata on p. 12.

#### Performance:

Boxed material on p.6: Choir (including all altos and tenors until figure 2) repeat one or more of the boxes (i, ii and iii), in any order, at a similar tempo to the tenor soloist. Boxed material is whispered as singers move from the sides of the performance space to the stage area. Boxed material is sung when singers reach the stage area. Thus the soloists (who are already on the stage area) will not whisper, but will sing the boxed material from cue 1.

At figure 2, altos and tenors are led by the conductor.

At figure 3 (cued by the alto/tenor C), choir I (sopranos and basses) are led by a conductor from within their section.

From figure 3 until figure 6, the 3 groups of singers (altos and tenors, choir I and choir II) are not synchronised with each other. Each group of singers has its own metre and tempo. Thus during this section the score is an aid to performance only; it does not show how the three groups of singers will sound together as parts do not align vertically. Pitch cues are shown by dotted arrows between parts.

At figure 4 (cued by the sustained soprano/bass C in choir I), choir II (sopranos and basses) are led by a conductor from within their section.

Glissandi begin on any note (ideally as high as possible). It is not necessary for singers to pick the same note as neighbouring voices, but in each choir, glissandi should proceed at a constant tempo. Voices may fade in and out to take breaths, ensuring that the overall sound is continuous. If possible, glissandi should be timed so that choir I and choir II glissandi overlap at some point.

p.9: Altos and tenors: The conductor signals cue 5 after the glissando is heard in either choir I or choir II.

p.10: fermata is held until choirs I and II have reached a G. Voices may fade in and out to take breaths, ensuring that the overall sound is continuous

Figure 6: All singers follow the principal conductor from this point. The score shows the vertical alignment of voices from this point onwards.

The fermata in the last bar (choir II humming with an open mouth) leads straight into movement 3 without a break.

#### Christus est stella matutina

Staging: Singers remain in the same position as in movement 2 (with a clear division between choir I and choir II).

Performance: On p.16, the sustained middle C (alto 2) leads straight into movement 4 without a break.

#### Deo gratias: ite in pace

Staging: Singers remain in the same position as in movement 3 (with a clear division between choir I and choir II).

At figure B2, the soloists should move to the front of the stage area so that they are in position for their entry at B3. At B4, the soloists start to walk slowly down the central aisle of the performance space. The soloists stand still to sing each block of material (cued by the conductor or by one of the soloists), before resuming their progress down the aisle. At C1, all other voices begin to walk slowly towards the back of the performance space, down the side aisles (if possible). Before C5, the soloists should turn to face the stage area before singing their final phrase.

Performance: On p.17, first altos join the sustained middle C gradually, *ad lib*. Altos fade out gradually as soon as the sopranos begin to sing.

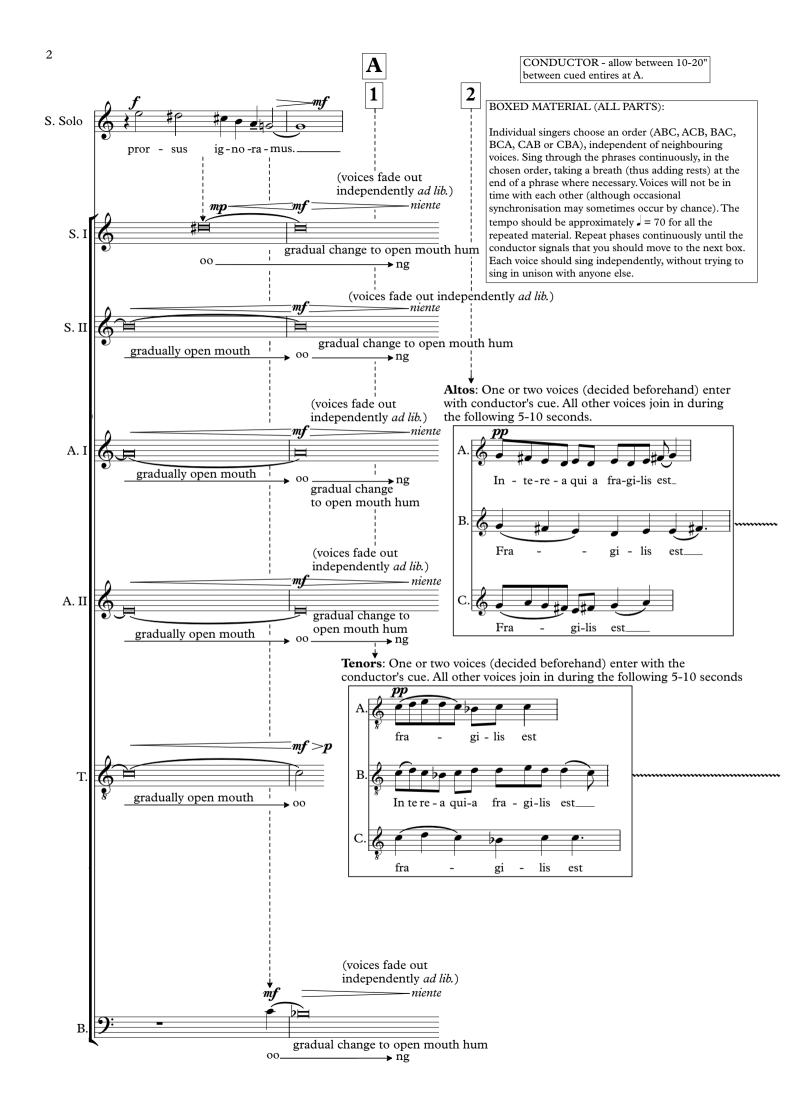
For each of the boxes of repeated material (beginning at figure 1), one or two voices (decided beforehand) enter with the conductor's cue. Other voices join in during the following 5-10 seconds.

At cue C4, all singers (except the soloists) begin a diminuendo to nothing, ending independently *ad lib* during or slightly after the soloists' phrase at C4.

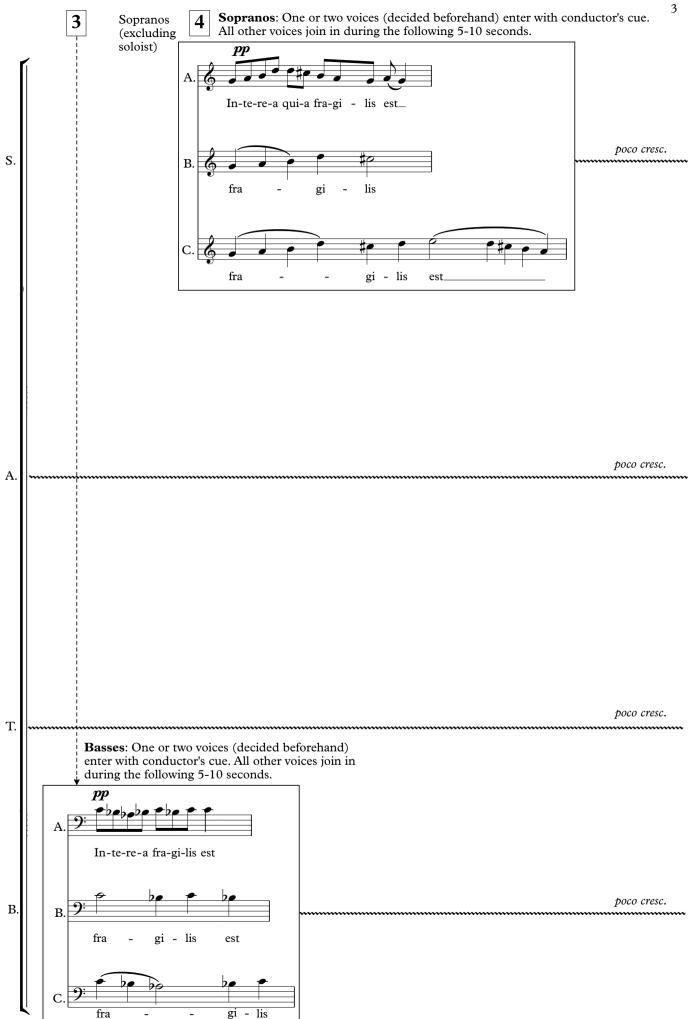
#### **Programme Note**

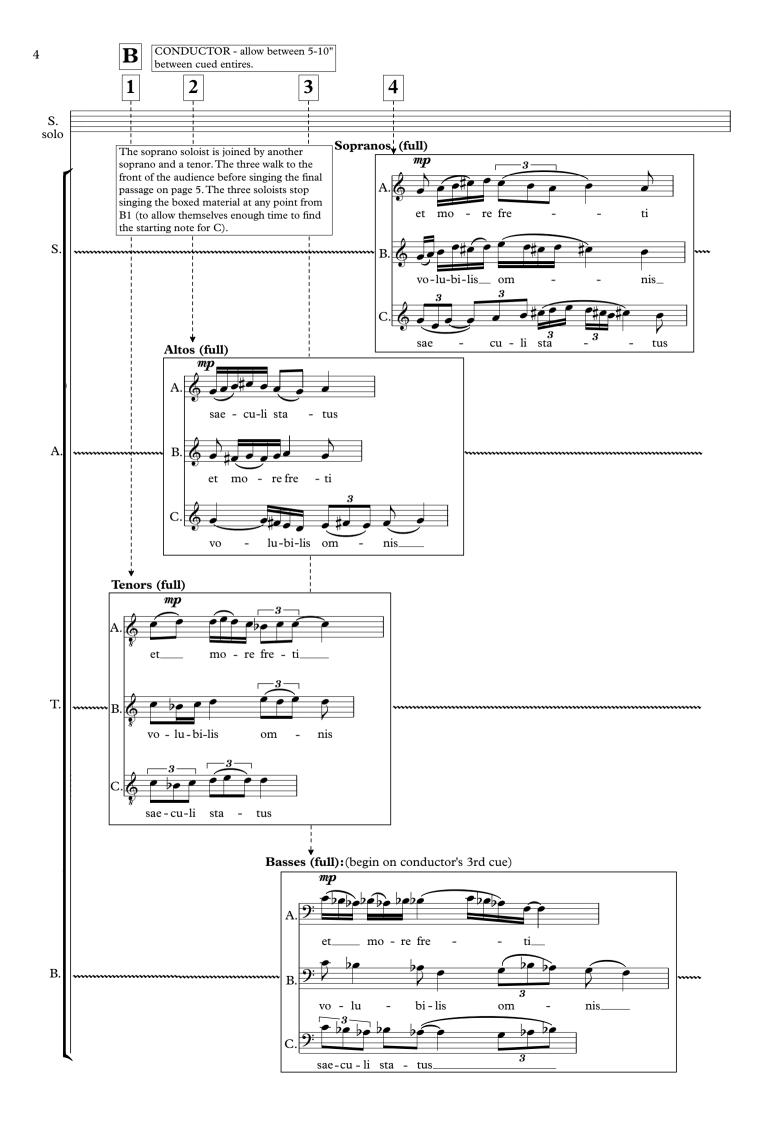
*Vita Hominum* was inspired by the early medieval history of Northumbria. With the exception of the last movement, all of the texts come from writings by the Venerable Bede. The overriding theme is of a journey from storm and uncertainty to a place of serenity. At the end of the piece, the journey resumes and the music disperses.



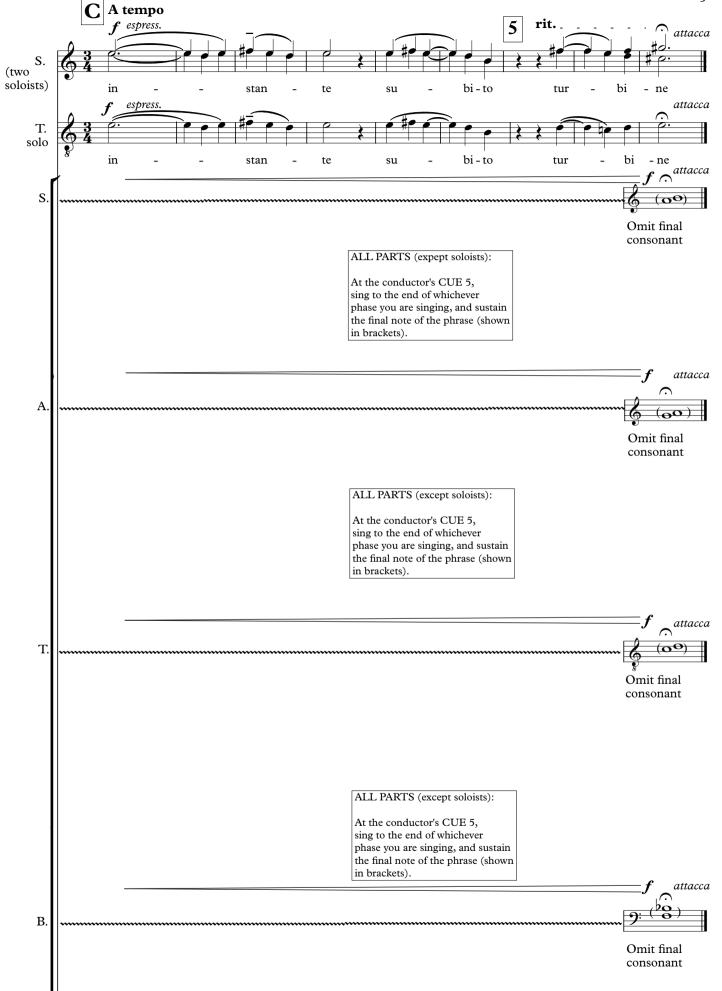






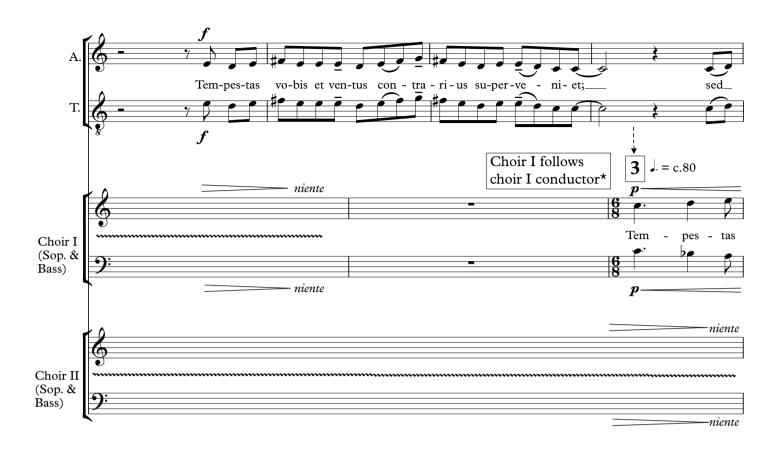






## 2. Tempestas





**\*NOTE:** from cue 3 until cue 6, the 3 groups of singers (altos and tenors, choir I and choir II) are not synchronised with each other. Each group of singers has its own metre and tempo.

Thus the score is an aid to performance only; it does not show how the three groups of singers will sound together as parts do not align vertically. Pitch cues are shown by dotted arrows between parts.



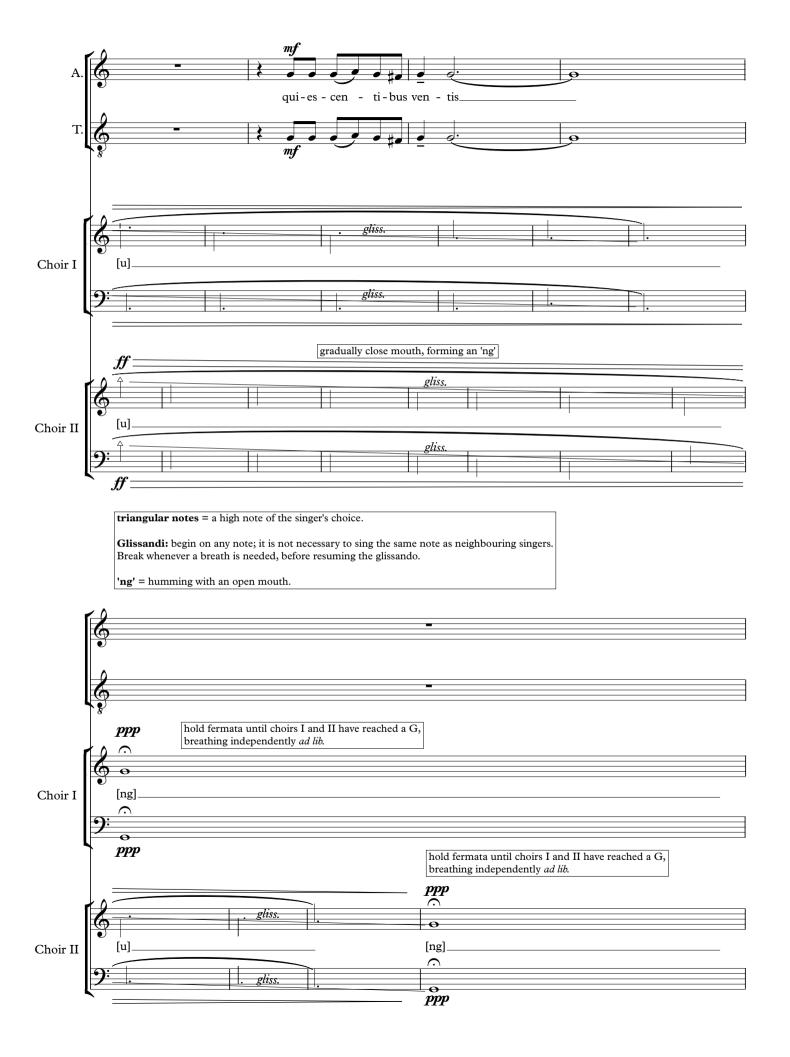




Altos and Tenors: The conductor signals cue 5 after the gliss is heard in either choir I or choir II

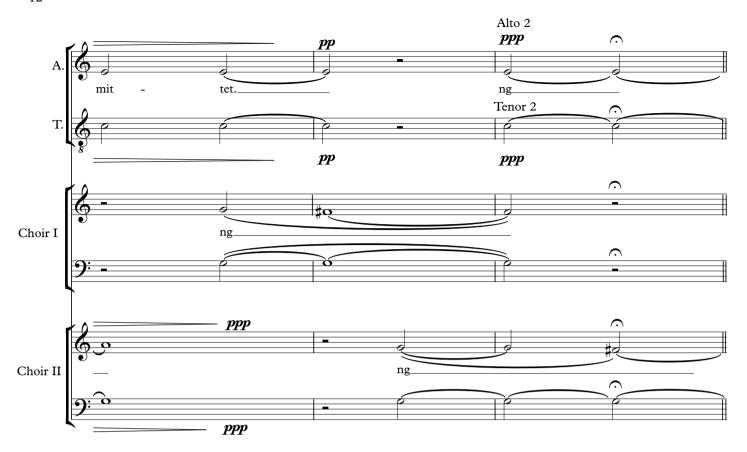




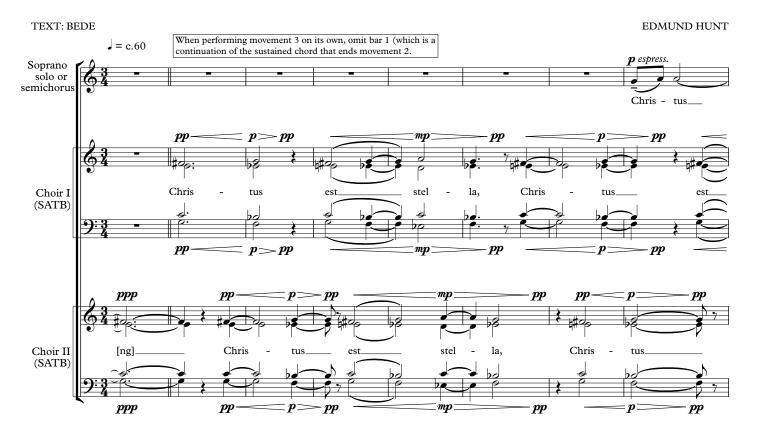




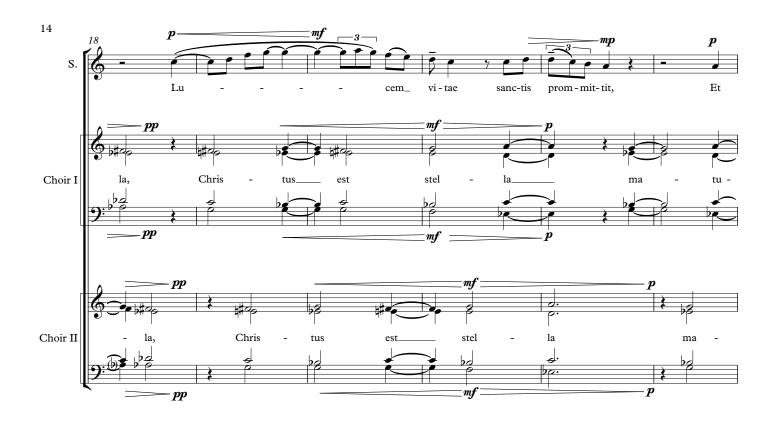


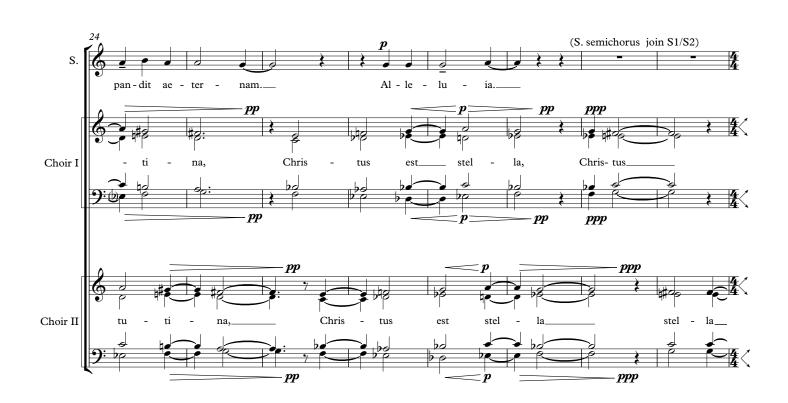


#### 3. Christus est stella matutina













## 4. Deo gratias: ite in pace

