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  1. Eia Jesus Hodie
  2. A Child of the Snows
  3. As I Sat on a Sunny Bank
  4. A Christmas Lullaby
  5. Welcome to Heaven's King

*Note:  
 These recordings are taken from a number of sources, including live performances.  
 As some recordings were made under time constraints, or in front of an audience, they may not necessarily represent the best of any given choir.  
 Thanks are given to the various groups for the use of their performances for this CD.*

#### DAVID HAMILTON

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New Zealand composer David Hamilton (b.1955) was Head of Music at Epsom Girls Grammar School until the end of 2001 where he conducted the award-winning girls choir Opus. He is Deputy Music Director of Auckland Choral and has been Composer-in-Residence with the Auckland Philharmonia (1999). He concentrates on composing while maintaining part-time involvement in music education as a composition tutor and choral conductor. He is well-known as a choral conductor, adjudicator, workshop leader and clinician. His choral music is widely performed, and is published in the UK, USA, and Finland. Works have been commissioned by choirs in Japan, England, USA, Finland and Ireland. Choral works have won competitions in Italy (2000 – “Veni Sancte Spiritus”) and the USA (2005 – “Deus, Deus meus”). In 2006 he won the Ned Rorem Award for Song Composition (USA) and the NZ Flute Society’s composers’ competition. In 2007 “Hine Raukatauri”, a concerto for flute and chamber orchestra, took 1st prize in the Haifa International Composers Competition (Israel), and a setting of “The Singers” took 2nd place in the Longfellow Chorus Composers Competition (USA).

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# The Treble Voice Choral Music of David Hamilton

..... *Volume 2*



***works for upper voices, with and without accompaniment***

## 1. Whisper to me

SSA, string orchestra and percussion

This short work sets a text by New Zealand author and poet Patricia Grace. It comes from the anthology “A Book of Pacific Lullabies” which also provided the texts for my choral cycle “Whisper You All The Way Home”. “Whisper to me” is a short lullaby with a verse in English followed by a verse in Maori. The English verse is set in a conventionally melodic style, while the Maori verse is set in a style suggesting the melodic and rhythmic forms of traditional waiata. Against this second verse a solo cello plays the original melody. The work ends by dissipating into sounds suggesting night.

“Whisper to me” was commissioned by St Cuthbert’s College, Auckland in 2003. It was subsequently incorporated into the major choral work “Missa Pacifica” (2004).

*Performed by Saints Alive and Sebastian Squad (St Cuthbert’s College, Auckland), directed by Graham McPhail*

## 2. Pangur Ban

SA, piano (with optional percussion parts)

The true origins of this Irish text are lost in the mists of time although it is generally agreed to date from around the 9th century. Amongst the various stories of its origins are that it was written by an Irish monk in Austria (or maybe Switzerland), in the margin of a manuscript (or maybe on the back of a page), and in Irish. One story even suggests it was written while the monk was working on the Book of Kells (almost certainly false though).

The poem was originally in a form of Gaelic and the generally acknowledged best translation is by the scholar Robin Flower (1881-1946) – an English poet and translator from the Irish language.

The name of the cat, Pangur Ban (more correctly Pangur Bán), simply means ‘white Pangur’ or ‘white cat’, Pangur being a common name for a cat. In translation the cat is referred to as male – a talented tomtac!

One source sums up the poem this way:

Sometimes called “The Monk and his Cat”, the poem

Pangur Bán was written by an Irish monk, in the 9th century. It details the similarities between the scribe hunting appropriate words and solutionis, and his pet cat hunting mice.

“Pangur Ban” was written at the request of conductor Jane Money for Boston City Singers in the USA.

*Performed by Boston City Singers, conducted by the composer.*

## 3. The Mechanical Dragon

SSA, piano (and optional ‘noise-makers’)

This short piece was written in 1996 for Elise Bradley and the choirs at Westlake Girls High School in Auckland. She had requested something that was up-tempo and fun to sing. I was already working on a cycle drawn from the book “The Dragons are Singing Tonight” by American Jack Prelutsky. Looking at other poems in the volume I decided to make a setting of “I Made a Mechanical Dragon”. The piece was ultimately incorporated into the larger cycle.

The work incorporates the sounds a mechanical dragon might make, and includes parts for metal and wooden ‘noise-makers’. As the words of the poem suggest, the resulting contraption is not completely successful but at least the poet can boast that “...I made it myself with my hands”!

*Performed by Euphony (Kristin College) conducted by Nick Richardson*

## 4. Not Made With Hands

SSA, piano

This work, written in 2006, sets a poem by New Zealand poet Ruth Gilbert. The poem is in two verses – the first having a questioning and searching tone, while the second presents the resolution. Love is at the centre of the text: for it is love that is the “rose that will not die” and the “house not made with hands”. The text begins: Find me the rose that will not die,  
The tree no axe can fell,  
The spring no Summer’s drought shall dry,  
And this last miracle:

*Performed by Diocesan Senior Choir (Diocesan School*

*for Girls, Auckland) conducted by David Gordon*

## 5. E moe te ra

SSA, piano

This waiata (Maori song) was written around 1918 by Erima Maewa Kaihau (1879-1941). She was also involved in the complex gestation of the song “Now is the Hour”.

Erima Maewa Kaihau (b.1879 - d.1941) was born Louisa Flavell at Whangaroa, in Northland. On her father’s side she is said to have descended from French nobles fleeing the French Revolution, and from a musician from the court of the Austrian Emperor. On her mother’s side she was a direct descendant of Nga Puhī chief Hone Hika of Ngati Rahiri and Ngati Rehia Hapu. Maewa was the second wife of Henare Kaihau, (of Waiuku, near Manukau), the Maori Member of Parliament representing Western Maori until 1920, and she bore him six daughters and two sons. Maewa was musically gifted; she played the piano, sang, and also taught music. She was also well known for reading her poetry.

(source: www.folksong.org.nz)

“E moe te Ra” is very much in the late Victorian tradition of song writing and owes little to traditional Maori song forms or styles. The English “translation” in the score begins: “Shadows of evening bring tender thoughts of thee beloved...”. The music has an unusual phrase structure and some unexpected harmonic turns. In this arrangement some re-harmonisation has been used, particularly in the first half. The second half follows the original harmonies more closely. Rather than set the English of the printed music, the Maori words are sung through twice, with a short introduction and coda.

The arrangement was made at the request of choral director David Gordon of Diocesan School for Girls, Auckland.

A literal translation of the text is:

That which sleeps is sad,

Where are you my love?

I’m broken for you

So here are my tears – what is this pain?.

I look inside of me for love.

Only tears, only that you cannot see returns to me.

*Performed by St. Cecilia Singers (Diocesan School for Girls, Auckland) conducted by David Gordon*

## 6. Bound for Canaan Land†

SSAA unaccompanied

This short setting of a traditional Afro-American spiritual text was written for Opus at Epsom Girls Grammar School (Auckland) in 2003. It makes use of the ‘call and response’ technique of early spirituals, and uses typical harmonic and melodic ideas. The meaning of these texts was most often covert. Therefore, only Christian slaves understood them, and even when ordinary words were used, they reflected personal relationship between the slave singer and God.

*Performed by Opus (Epsom Girls Grammar School, Auckland) conducted by the composer*

## 7. This Old Hammer†

SSAA unaccompanied

“This Old Hammer” was originally the first piece in a cycle of short choral movements called “Transatlantic” (1983) in which American and English texts alternated. A year or so after that work was premiered, this reworking (from SATB) was made for SSAA voices.

The text is a traditional American one, telling of working on a work gang and longing to go back home “...to Swannanoa town”. The music makes a particular feature of irregular time signatures, especially seven-in-a-bar.

*Performed by Opus (Epsom Girls Grammar School, Auckland) conducted by the composer*

## 8. Laksin mina kesäyönä käymään†

SSA/SSA unaccompanied

This setting of a traditional Finnish folksong was made while David Hamilton was in Finland in 1989 with his choir Opus New Zealand. The choir had been invited to take part in an exchange with the Youth Choir of Oulainen in the north-west of Finland. At the end of the final concert in Oulainen, the host choir joined with the

New Zealanders to sing several pieces together.

This folk song was arranged especially for that occasion - originally with 4 verses sung in Finnish given to one choir (the host choir), leaving only one verse in Finnish to be learnt by the visitors! Accompanying material (in the other choir) was limited to wordless vocalises. This slightly revised version gives a more even distribution between the two choirs. The accompanying choral material suggests the traditional folk instrument of Finland, the kantele (a 5-stringed plucked instrument). The text tells of a girl sitting by the waters waiting for her loved one who has sailed away. Although she fears that her loved one will not return, the story has a happy ending.

*Performed by Juvenalia conducted by Matti Järvinen*

## 9. Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day?†

SSA, guitar

This setting of Shakespeare’s famous sonnet number 18, was originally the middle movement of a cycle of Shakespeare texts written for Auckland Choral Society in 1999. This movement allowed the women’s voices to feature on their own.

*Performed by the women of Auckland Choral Society, with Bruce Paine guitar, conducted by the composer*

## 10. Rain

SSAA, oboe (with rainsticks and stones)

This work was written in 2002 for Opus at Epsom Girls Grammar School. It sets one of New Zealand poet Hone Tuwhare’s best-known poems. It is a somewhat sensual description of the sounds and smells of rain. The setting is for unaccompanied choir and oboe, with the instrumental part often proceeding at a speed independent of the choir. The score includes harmonic singing from the choir, and the use of rain-sticks and stones.

*Performed by Opus (Epsom Girls Grammar School, Auckland) conducted by the composer*

## 11. A Child Comes Forth

SSA, harp and percussion

- Eia Jesus Hodie
- A Child of the Snows
- As I Sat on a Sunny Bank
- A Christmas Lullaby
- Welcome to Heaven’s King

This work was written at the request of conductor Elise Bradley for her highly regarded choir Key Cygnetures at Westlake Girls High School (Auckland). It was intended for a ‘mid-winter Christmas’ concert in 2006 which also featured Britten’s “A Ceremony of Carols”. I therefore felt happy to turn to Christmas texts with some of the more traditional Christmas references (snow etc).

The first text is from the fifteenth century and is a general text mentioning Mary, the manger, the wise men, and the gifts they brought, and ends with call to delight in the Christ child. The second text, by G.K. Chesterton contains images of snow and night, and ends with the line that gives the work its overall title. The third text is a variant of the carol “I saw three ships come sailing in” and may refer either to the medieval myth that Joseph and Mary travelled to England, or obliquely to purported journeys of the relics of the wise men.

The fourth text is a lullaby by nineteenth century poet John Addington Symonds. Again the wise men and their gifts are mentioned along with the shepherds. The final text is another anonymous one, and is simply a brief and energetic welcome to ‘heaven’s King’.

*Performed by Key Cygnetures (Westlake Girls High School, Auckland), with Helen Webby (harp) and Rowan Johnston (percussion), conducted by Elise Bradley*

*†These scores are published by SULASOL (Finland).*