

Family of Man

Family of Man is a generic title given to a projected collection of music for voices, instruments and digital media making up a new secular concert-length oratorio. It aims to be a truly inclusive work: a meeting ground for amateur, student and professional performers. Along with opportunities for collaborations with theatre, dance and visual media, it builds on composer Nigel Morgan's multi-location BBC commissions *Conversations in Colour* and *Schizophonia* in its potential for involving real and virtual communities using digital media and web-based broadcasting.

The starting point for the collection has been Barbara Hepworth's celebrated series of sculptures called *Nine Figures on a Hill*, but more commonly known as *Family of Man*. These sculptures exist as complete sets in two locations: The Donald M. Kendall Sculpture Gardens at PepsiCo World Headquarters, Purchase, New York State in the USA, and at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, West Yorkshire in the UK.

The heart of the project, a 15-minute choral work called *Nine Figures on a Hill*, was completed during the summer of 2004 and receives its premiere in Japan during 2006. Setting words by poet Margaret Morgan, the *Nine Choral Songs for Double Choir* were written jointly for Cantemus Chamber Choir Wales and soloists from the Norwegian choir Det Norsk Solistkor.

Surrounding *Nine Figures* is planned a constellation of choral and instrumental works. The vocal music will set words by Margaret Morgan reflecting particular associations with the life, writings and images of sculptor Barbara Hepworth, pioneer anthropologist and social scientist Margaret Mead, and the celebrated photographer Ken Heyman. In making associations with such ground-breaking figures in the arts, humanities and media the composer and writer plan to fashion a special sequence of meditations and celebrations of the phenomenon that continues to nurture and support the human condition: the family.

Three further collections of accompanied choral and solo songs are now envisaged to form **Family of Man**: *Seven Ages*, *Five Rites of Passage*, *Three Soliloquies*. Alongside will be a collection of instrumental music prefacing, linking and sometimes directly commenting upon the vocal items, some in an open scoring to enable integration with local and regional instrumental traditions. To bind the collections of songs and instrumental music together will be an extended sound and image scape bringing together location sounds and photographic images designed both to be integrated within the performance sequence and as a web-based installation.

The genesis of this new treatment of **Family of Man** came from Nigel Morgan's tenure as composer-in-residence for the Hepworth Centenary Exhibition at Yorkshire Sculpture Park in 2003. During his residency Nigel Morgan completed three works: *The Present Moment is the Only Real Time*, a setting of Hepworth's own words for girls' voices and keyboard, the song-cycle *Stone and Flower* to words from a collection by Kathleen Raine for which Hepworth had created a series of illustrations; a sequence of instrumental fantasias titled *Music for Sculptures* based on some of the many sculptures owning musical titles and featuring specially comm.-issioned 'background' poems by Margaret Morgan. The Yorkshire Sculpture Park residency also included the world premiere of a novel realization for percussion ensemble of Priaulx Rainier's *Rhythm of the Stones*, based on notations of Hepworth's carving rhythms.