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150 Psalms

Justice

Sat 29 Feb 2020, 9pm, St Peter's Cathedral

The Song Company
Antony Pitts, conductor
Anthony Hunt, organ

Introduction by Professor Danielle Celermajer

Clare Maclean (b. 1958)	Psalms 11 (world premiere)*
Cathy Milliken (b. Brisbane)	Psalms 12 (world premiere)*
Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)	Psalms 37, <i>Os justi</i>
Pascal de l'Estocart (ca.1538-1587)	Psalms 49, <i>Omnes gentes</i>
Thomas Crecquillon (ca.1505-ca.1557)	Psalms 52, <i>Quid gloriaris in malicia</i>
Gottfried August Homilius (1714-1785)	Psalms 73, <i>Dennoch bleib ich stets an dir</i>
Nicolas Gombert (ca.1495-ca.1560)	Psalms 75, <i>Confitebimur tibi</i>
Anonymous	Psalms 112, <i>Beatus vir</i>
Ned Rorem (b. 1923)	Psalms 85, <i>Mercy and truth are met</i>
David Lang (b. 1957)	Psalms 101, <i>If I sing</i> (Australian premiere)
Michel-Richard Delalande (1657-1726)	Psalms 144, <i>Benedictus Dominus Deus meus</i>

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Professor Danielle Celermajer, speaker

Professor Danielle Celermajer is a political theorist at The University of Sydney and lead of the Multispecies Justice Collective. After 30 years working in human rights, she has now turned to bring together human, animal and environmental justice. Her books include *Sins of the Nation and the Ritual of Apology* and *The Prevention of Torture: An Ecological Approach*, both with Cambridge University Press. She has a forthcoming book with Penguin/Random House on living and dying in the age of the climate catastrophe.

I would like to acknowledge the lands and waters on which we are meeting tonight - the traditional land of the Gharna people. I'd like to express our respect for their spiritual relationship with this country. I'd like to pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

"Justice, justice (tzedek tzedek) shall you pursue so that you may flourish and live within the lands that you have been gifted."

These words don't in fact come from the Psalms, which we will be hearing tonight, but from another part of the Bible or Torah - from the book of Deuteronomy.

In Deuteronomy, Moses - now 120 years old, and about to die just before he would get to enter the promised land - recounts his life, and sets down how those who will get to enter the land - ought to live.

"Justice, justice (tzedek tzedek) shall you pursue so that you may flourish and live within the lands that you have been gifted."

I opened this evening with those words for two reasons.

First, most of the passages about justice in these texts assume that it is an entirely

human affair, or an affair between humans and God. But here, the justice of our lives is explicitly connected with the possibility of our continuing to live on the earth.

In other words, it is not only our fate, but the fate of the earth that is at stake when justice is at issue.

The second reason I chose it was because of its curious repetition of the word justice ("Justice justice"). This musical punctuation lifts the idea of justice out of its dull resting place in a sentence and calls us out of our dull resting place as passive listeners, inviting us to attend to what it might mean for us, here and now to actually pursue justice.

Justice justice demands that justice become a matter of immediacy. That justice becomes a matter of authentic concern.

That justice gets pulled out from the pile of dead concepts and reanimated as a living possibility that might make for the possibility of living.

If I were to say to you, 'Everyone, pursue justice!', my guess is that you would hear

the word with the type of automaticity we tend to bring to most of our communications.

In other words, it would be assimilated into the standard stock of taken for granted meanings we carry around with us to navigate the world.

We all know what justice means. Nothing new here. Something to do with balance, Maybe with equality, With wrongdoers getting their rightful due. It probably evokes a few stock images - a blindfolded lady, scales, grey wigs.

But what if the call to justice occurred to you as an invitation to reflect upon its meaning with the type of creativity, ardour and urgency you would bring to thinking about the meaning of 'healing' if someone you loved was dying?

In the spirit of that invitation, and anticipating how music will animate justice for us together this evening, I want to think with you for a few minutes about what justice might mean for us. In Australia. In 2020. As we enter the climate catastrophe.

It's actually not so easy to get at what the concept of justice means.

But when we ask ourselves about injustice, things tend to get a lot sharper.

Imagine if you will, the following scenario. Some of us have established a set of conditions that will - without doubt - endanger the lives of others.

We have given them no say in the decisions about how to control or change the conditions.

And now that they are in them, they have no way out.

I suspect that few people here would disagree that the situation I just sketched counts as an injustice.

It's this intuition about the link between injustice, suffering and exploitation that makes us recoil at slavery, at the use of child soldiers, at placing asylum seekers in detention camps for year upon year.

All of those examples are, of course, about how some humans treat other humans.

But if you take this exact account, it applies letter for letter to the situation of beings other than humans living and increasingly dying in the climate catastrophe.

The billion animals who were killed when 12 million hectares or 120,000 square kilometres of bush was incinerated in the last months fires.

The uncountable trees, the shrubs, the grasses, the fungi, the insects, the microbes.

The vibrant ecosystems and lively relationships that animate all of them.

The earth that has been gifted to us also.

Now go back to my depiction of what makes injustice. All of them live within conditions that endanger their lives. None of them are given a say in decisions about those conditions. And they have no way out.

I'm well aware that I'm out on a limb here. To call the fate of animals and trees and forests an injustice, is - I realise - a stretch for most of us. Historically, in Western cultures at least, justice has been the unique preserve of humans.

When it comes to animals or trees or ecosystems, we may acknowledge that we

can do them harm.
We might even acknowledge that we bear certain ethical responsibilities not to inflict unnecessary suffering on them. Especially if recognise that they share qualities we value in ourselves, like intelligence or sentience.

But for the most part – that is for most living beings, we don't even acknowledge those minimal ethical demands. Why? – because we see them as resources for our use, not as subjects of their own lives.

Certainly not subjects with claims of justice. But remember, justice justice you shall pursue.

What would happen if we suspended the inherited understandings of justice? Understandings that were, let's not forget, built in and for other worlds.

Like the understanding of justice developed during the religious wars, when people decided that if they weren't going to tear each other to shreds, justice needed to mean keeping religion out of politics? That was a justice forged for their time and the crises they were facing.

But, what does justice mean for our time and the crises we are facing?

What does justice mean in a world where the very conditions of life for all beings – human and other than human – are the toxic conditions that humans have created?

Where those conditions are, and this we can no longer doubt – conditions of unliveability for many beings with whom we share this earth.

Justice in this world, it seems to me, has to be a justice that includes those other beings. And includes them not simply as things

we might appreciate, economically, aesthetically, or sentimentally.

But as subjects with their own forms of life. Their own relationships. Their own ways of flourishing.

Subjects who have been recruited, surely against their will, into omnicide – the killing of everything - that we humans are committing.

Subjects, in other words, against whom we are committing the gravest of injustices.

Now a few of you may have had a quick read of some of the psalms before you came tonight or just now waiting for us to start.

And you may well be thinking – the justice she is describing bears no resemblance to the justice set out in the Psalms.

That's perhaps true, But only in the most literal sense.

The reason we still read these texts a couple of thousand years after they were written is precisely because they are sufficiently capacious to allow for new interpretations.

Like all great poetry, the spaces within or between the words are the spaces into which future generations can breathe new life and new meanings.

So, Deuteronomy, as written says:

"Justice, justice (tzedek tzedek) shall you pursue so that you may flourish and live within the lands that you have been gifted."

What if we were to say, or sing:
"Justice, justice (tzedek tzedek) shall we pursue so that we – all earth being- may flourish and live within the lands that we – all earth beings - have been gifted."

Programme note by Oek de Jong

A god as supreme judge is a symbol which plays an important role in many religions. As such this god is also the guardian of ethical living, the highest morality, and thus of peace among the people. Swüste: 'An important question in the Psalms is: how can it be that evil people prosper whilst good people are weighed down with all kinds of misery? Many psalms give the answer: it's all about happiness in the long term. And what is certain is that you will be happy if you act justly.'

This is splendidly sung about in Psalm 73, set here by J S Bach's pupil **Gottfried Homilius**: in the first section, a somewhat jealous glance is directed towards someone who lives aimlessly, but in the second section the poet finds peace and happiness. Each of the three newly commissioned psalm settings for this project happen to be composed by women and two of them are premiered here. **Claire Mclean** exclusively writes for voice and the substantial body of work emanating from her home in Western Sydney arguably represents some of the world's finest choral music of recent decades. **Cathy Milliken** came to prominence as a contemporary cellist (she's a founding

member of Ensemble Modern Germany) but is now a widely commissioned composer of orchestral and chamber music across Europe and Asia. Psalm 12 is her first work for a *capella* choir. Like Cathy, LA born **David Lang** was there at the start of a legendary contemporary music group, New York's Bang on a Can. His powerful, direct and often deceptively simple works have attracted numerous prizes, including a Pulitzer in 2008 for *The Little Match Girl Passion*. Also a Pulitzer winner is distinguished American composer **Ned Rorem**. Amongst his vast and all-encompassing oeuvre, the much-loved Mercy and truth are met shines like a jewel.

Set against masters of the Renaissance and Baroque such as **Crecquillon**, **Gombert**, **De l'Estocart**, and **De Lalande**, **Anton Bruckner**'s harmonically rich psalm setting *Os justi*, like so much of the late romantic iconoclast's output, seems to look backward as well as forward. We owe such glorious motets to the influence of the so-called Cecilian Movement for the revival of a *capella* sacred music, actively promoted by Catholic musicologist and friend of Liszt **Franz Haberl**.

Clare Maclean (b. 1958) Psalm 11 (world premiere)

1. For the lead player, for David,
In the LORD I sheltered.
How could you say to me,
"Off to the hills like a bird!

2. For, look, the wicked bend back the bow,
they fix to the string their arrow
to shoot from the gloom at the upright.

3. The foundations destroyed,
what can a righteous man do?"

4. The LORD in His holy place,
The LORD in the heavens His throne-
His eyes behold,
His look probes the sons of man.

5. The LORD probes the righteous and wicked,
and the lover of havoc He utterly hates.

6. He rains fiery coals on the wicked,
Sulphur and gale-winds their lot.

7. For righteousness The LORD is,
righteous acts He does love.
The upright behold His face.

(Text: from *The Book of Psalms* translated by Robert Alter. Copyright © 2007 by Robert Alter. Used by permission of George Borchardt, Inc., on behalf of the translator.)

A note from the composer

This setting of Psalm 11 draws from two Yemenite Jewish melodies which are adapted and fragmented. One melody is for Psalm 11 and the other is for the Jewish liturgical poem Kirya Yefefiya, by Halevi and Elchahri. This poem expresses a longing for Jerusalem, whose rubble reflects the havoc referred to in Psalm 11, and like the Psalm, it points to a more eternal reality: "Let me fall on thy broken stones and tenderly kiss them - The taste of thy dust will be sweeter than honey to me."

Clare Maclean



Clare Maclean was born in NZ in 1958, and has studied composition in Sydney with Peter Sculthorpe and Bruce Crossman. As a student, she began singing with the Sydney Chamber Choir, and this experience of modal counterpoint was a formative influence on her composition. The Choir recorded her Osanna Mass on the Tall Poppies label, and this won the Australian Art Music Award for vocal music in 2012.

Clare has been commissioned by ensembles in Australia and overseas, and was composer-in-residence with the St Louis Chamber Chorus (Missouri) from 2006 to 2011. She teaches at Western Sydney University.

Cathy Milliken Psalm 12 (world premiere)

Free after Robert Alter's translation of Psalm 12:
("To the lead player, on the eight-stringed Lyre, a David psalm")

Let us make our tongue great,
Who is master to us?

(The people say:)

Rescue, O LORD!

For the faithful is gone,
for the trust has vanished
the trust is gone, has vanished.

Falsehoods
smooth talk, with two hearts they speak falsehoods.

O LORD, Rescue!

(The LORD says:)

Now I will rise from the plunder of the poor, from
the wretched men's groans.

Now I will rise to rescue him.

I will set up for rescue a witness for him.

I will rescue him

Now

(The people answer:)

You, LORD, will guard him, will keep him from the
age of all time.

(Text: from *The Book of Psalms* translated by Robert Alter. Copyright © 2007 by Robert Alter. Used by permission of George Borchardt, Inc., on behalf of the translator. Adaptation by Catherine Milliken)

Cathy Milliken



Cathy Milliken studied in Australia, majoring in performance (piano and oboe). A founding member of Ensemble Modern, Germany, she has composed for concert, opera, radio, film and commissioners include: South Bank Centre London, the Staatsoper Berlin, Ensemble Modern, Asko Ensemble, London Sinfonietta and Musica Viva and Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra.

International participatory compositions and projects include Umculo Festival, South Africa, Future Labo, Japan and Berlin Philharmonic, Klangspuren Festival, North Tyrol and Munich Biennale.

She is recipient of Prix Italia with Dietmar Wiesner for *Bunyah*, Prix Marulic, the 2016 Australian ArtMusic Award for an orchestral work and in 2019 was awarded a two year Australian Fellowship Award. She is presently Composer in Association of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra for the Seasons 2018 to 2020.

She lives in Berlin as a freelance composer, performer and creative director and is currently a doctoral candidate at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia.

A note from the composer

Psalm 12 is a passionate plea to the Lord to hear the voice of justice and be saved from the voices proclaiming deceptive lies. "Rescue, O Lord! for the faithful is gone, for vanished is trust from the sons of man", they cry. This resonates greatly with the situation today of bipartisan politics and the difficulty of defining truth. „Let us make our tongues great" cry the deceivers thus causing the believers seek justice from the Lord. I have adapted the Psalm accordingly by structuring the text into sections to highlight each of the pleas as in a court of law, the Lord finally announcing his setting up of witness for the plight of those seeking justice. Each section favours a different vocal colour and register of the wonderful Song Company for which this was composed.

Anton Bruckner (1824-1896) Psalm 37, *Os justi*

30. Os justi meditabitur sapientiam
et lingua ejus loquetur judicium;

31. Lex Dei ejus in corde ipsius
et non subplantabuntur gressus ejus.

30. The righteous man's mouth utters wisdom,
and his tongue speaks judgment.

31. The law of his God is in his heart;
his feet do not falter.

Pascal de l'Estocart (ca.1538-1587) Psalm 49, *Omnnes gentes*

1. Peuples oyez, et laureilles pretez,
hommes mortels, qui le monde habitez,

2. des plus petis, jusques plus puissants,
riches hautins et povres languissans,

3. sages propos ma bouche annoncera,
graves discours mon cœur entamera :

4. a mes beaux mots l'aureille je veux tendre,
tt sur mon lut grands choses vous apprendre.

1. Hear this, all you peoples; hearken,
all you who dwell in the world,

2. you of high degree and low,
rich and poor together.

3. My mouth shall speak of wisdom,
and my heart shall meditate on understanding.

4. I will incline my ear to a proverb
and set forth my riddle upon the harp.

Thomas Crecquillon (ca.1505-ca.1557) Psalm 52, *Quid gloriaris in malicia*

I
3. Quid gloriaris in malitia,
qui potens es in iniquitate?

4. Tota die iniustitiam cogitavit lingua tua;
sicut novacula acuta fecisti dolum.

5. Dilexisti malitiam super benignitatem:
iniquitatem magis quam loqui æquitatem.

II
6. Dilexisti omnia verba præcipationis;
lingua dolosa.

7. Propterea Deus destruet te in finem;
et emigrabet te, evellet te de tabernaculo tuo,
et radicem tuam de terra viventium.

I
3. Why do you boast of evil,
you mighty man?

4. Your tongue plots destruction,
as a sharpened razor, working deceit.

5. You loved evil more than good,
falsehood more than speaking righteousness
forever.

II
6. You loved all destructive words, |
a deceitful tongue.

7. God, too, shall tear you down forever;
He will break you and pluck you from your tent,
and uproot you from the land of the living
forever.

Gottfried August Homilius (1714-1785) Psalm 73, *Dennoch bleib ich stets an dir*

23. Dennoch bleib ich stets an dir;
denn du hältst mich bei meiner rechten Hand,

24. Du leitest mich nach deinem Rat
und nimmst mich endlich mit Ehren an.

23. Yet I am always with You;
You hold me by my right hand.

24. You will guide me by Your counsel,
and afterwards receive me with glory.

Nicolas Gombert (ca.1495-ca.1560) Psalm 75, *Confitebimur tibi*

I
2. Confitebimur tibi, Deus, confitebimur,
et invocabimus nomen tuum;
narrabimus mirabilia tua.

3. Cum accipero tempus,
ego justitias judicabo.

4. Liquefacta est terra et omnes qui habitant in
ea:
ego confirmavi columnas ejus.

5. Dixi iniquis: nolite inique agere,
et delinquentibus: nolite exaltare cornu,

6. nolite extollere in altum cornu vestrum;
nolite loqui adversus Deum iniquitatem.

II
7. Quia neque ab oriente, neque ab occidente,
neque a desertis montibus:

8. quoniam Deus iudex est.
Hunc humiliat, et hunc exaltat:

9. quia calix in manu Domini vini meri,
plenus misto. Et inclinavit ex hoc in hoc;
verumtamen fæx ejus non est exinanita:
bibent omnes peccatores terræ.

10. Ego autem annuntiabo in sæculum;
cantabo Deo Jacob:

11. et omnia cornua peccatorum confringam,
et exaltabuntur cornua justi.

I
2. We have thanked You, O God,
we have thanked, and Your name is near;
they have told Your wonders.

3. When I take a festive day,
I shall judge with fairness.

4. When the earth and all its inhabitants were
melting away, I established its pillars forever.

5. I said to the perverse, 'Do not behave per-
versely,'
and to the wicked, 'Do not raise the horn.'

6. Do not raise your horn on high,
do not speak with your fat neck.

II
7. For it is not from the east or from the west,
neither from the desert does elevation come.

8. But God judges; He humbles this one
and elevates that one.

9. For a cup is in the hand of the Lord,
and strong wine, a full mixture,
and He pours out of this cup,
but all the wicked of the earth will drain and drink
it.

10. And I shall recite forever;
I shall sing praises to the God of Jacob.

11. And all the horns of the wicked I shall cut off;
the horns of the righteous will be upraised.

Anonymous Psalm 112, *Beatus vir*

1. Alleluja.
Beatus vir qui timet Dominum:
in mandatis ejus volet nimis.
2. Potens in terra erit semen ejus;
generatio rectorum benedicetur.
3. Gloria et divitiæ in domo ejus,
et justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi.
4. Exortum est in tenebris lumen rectis:
misericors, et miserator, et justus.
5. Jucundus homo qui miseretur et commodat;
disponet sermones suos in iudicio:
6. quia in æternum non commovebitur.
In memoria æterna erit justus;
7. ab auditione mala non timebit.
Paratum cor ejus sperare in Domino,
8. confirmatum est cor ejus;
non commovebitur donec despiciat inimicos
suos.
9. Dispersit, dedit pauperibus;
justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi:
cornu ejus exaltabitur in gloria.
10. Peccator videbit, et irascetur;
dentibus suis fremet et tabescet:
desiderium peccatorum peribit.

1. Hallelujah.
Praiseworthy is the man who fears the Lord,
who greatly desires His commandments.
2. His seed will be mighty in the land,
a generation of upright ones, which shall be
blessed.
3. Wealth and riches will be in his house,
and his righteousness endures forever.
4. He shone a light in the darkness for the
upright,
for He is gracious and merciful and righteous.
5. Good is the man who is gracious and lends,
who conducts his affairs with moderation.
6. For he will never falter;
for an everlasting memorial will the righteous
man be.
7. He will not fear bad news;
his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.
8. His heart is steadfast, he will not fear
until he sees in his adversaries.
9. He distributed, he gave to the needy;
his charity endures forever,
his horn will be raised with glory.
10. A wicked man will see and become angry;
he will gnash his teeth and melt;
the desire of the wicked will be lost.

Ned Rorem (b. 1923) Psalm 85, *Mercy and truth are met*

11. Mercy and truth are met together,
righteousness and peace have kissed.
12. Truth shall spring out of the earth;
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
13. Yea, the Lord shall show loving kindness,
and our land shall yield her increase.
14. Righteousness shall go before him;
and peace shall be the pathway of his steps.
11. Mercy and truth are met together.
Amen.

David Lang (b. 1957) Psalm 101, *If I sing* (Australian premiere)

If I sing of mercy, if I sing of justice,
if I sing your praises, will you come to me?
If I am true, if I am pure,
if I know no evil things, will you come to me?
If I'm not proud of eye or heart, will you come to me?
I see the faithful. I try so hard to follow them.
I see the liars. I try so hard to push them all away.
Every day I fight this fight, to push the bad away.
Will you come to me?
Come to me.

(text: David Lang, free after source text)

Michel-Richard Delalande (1657-1726) Psalm 144, *Benedictus Dominus Deus meus*

1. Benedictus Dominus Deus meus
qui docet manus meas ad praelium
et digitos meos ad bellum.

1. Blessed be the Lord my rock!
Who trains my hands to fight
and my fingers to battle.