**A Welcome Ode**

A Welcome Ode was commissioned by the Association of British Choral Directors for their 1997 conference in Sunderland. It was given a workshop performance on that occasion by the Delegates Choir, conducted by Simon Halsey.

The genesis of the work came from a commission which I undertook for the official opening of the Bridgewater Hall in December 1996 - on that occasion a short piece entitled *Welcome,* for boy's choir, organ, brass and percussion. However, the text on that occasion consisted of many repetitions of the word 'welcome' in various international languages, whereas for a *A Welcome Ode* I decided to write my own simple text.

In some ways the anthem harks back to the tradition of the Odes of Purcell, with its mixture of homophony and polyphony, whilst in other ways its strong rhythmic thrust reflects a more contemporary feel. It opens with gentle arpeggio figures on the piano/organ and long sustained melodic lines for female voices. Gradually the other voices enter and the music transforms into a fast and rhythmic middle section to the words ‘with singing and dancing’, and is exuberant in nature. The mood of the music gradually dissolves into tender enticement, with the words 'with peace, with love in our hearts, we embrace you, we welcome you', leading to a short repeat of the opening of the work, followed by an exultant and climactic coda.

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