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מד מכל אדם

COMPASSION

NIGEL WESTLAKE / LIOR
SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

رَوِّ وَ الصَّلَاةَ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ
تُ حَسَنَ صَاحِبِ

תָּר אַתְּמָם, וְאַתְּמָם לֹא בָנִים
אל-תקשו לבב

يوهتس

ما ونبى الهدا الا
قلاني وان كان المس
اشئت على مر فبحث به ولا مد

يوهتس

اصلة عن رسول الله صلى الله
حسن صحيح

אל-תקשו לבב
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לך אד
אל תהי בו לכ

לך אד
בו לכ



Compassion – Symphony of Songs

Song cycle for voice and orchestra by Lior and Nigel Westlake
based on a collection of ancient Hebrew and Arabic texts

1	Sim Shalom – Grant Peace	7'28
2	Eize Hu Chacham? – Who is Wise?	5'25
3	La Yu'minu – Until You Love Your Brother	4'18
4	Inna Rifqa – The Beauty Within	4'55
5	Al Takshu L'vavchem – Don't Harden Your Hearts	4'45
6	Ma Wadani Ahadun – Until the End of Time	7'57
7	Avinu Malkeinu – Hymn of Compassion	5'57
Total Playing Time		40'46

Lior vocals
Sydney Symphony Orchestra
Nigel Westlake conductor

*Compassion was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra,
for the SSO and the other Australian symphony orchestras,
with the support of Symphony Services International.*

The Genesis of *Compassion*

The catalyst for *Compassion* can be traced to a single watershed moment: the occurrence of my first Lior concert. It was the winter of 2009 in the tiny rural village of St Albans NSW, the occasion being the inaugural fundraising event for the Smugglers of Light, a foundation formed by our family in memory of my son Eli.

At dusk, as the winter mist settled upon the forgotten valley (as it is sometimes known), quietly nestled between the towering ridges of Hawkesbury River sandstone, Lior began to weave his magic upon the crowd, many of whom had travelled long distances to join us for the weekend music festival.

It was a poignant occasion that had been planned to coincide with the 12-month anniversary of Eli's death, and the music held a very special meaning for our friends and family, many of whom were still grappling with the tragic loss that had befallen us the previous year.

Lior's music had been introduced to me several years earlier by my son Joel, and had quickly become absorbed into the family playlist, underscoring many happy times and celebratory moments. As it happened, *Autumn Flow*, the album that rocketed Lior to prominence in 2005, was among the last music I shared with my son Eli the week before his death, thereby forever imbuing these sweet songs with a very unique and deeply personal significance for me.

A fortuitous family connection with a dear friend had facilitated a personal introduction and Lior had graciously accepted our request to perform for the foundation. It was one of those special nights that people talk about for years afterwards and also featured some wonderful performances from the Grigoryan brothers and the Goldner String Quartet.

Lior concluded the proceedings with one of his best-known songs, 'This Old Love'. As he was brought back on stage for the encore, little did I realise that his final offering for the night would hold the germ of an idea that would become the catalyst for a life-changing and enriching journey.

Coaxing us gently into another world, as if possessed by unseen forces, and without accompaniment, Lior began to embrace the plaintive and heartfelt strains of the ancient Hebrew hymn of compassion 'Avinu Malkeinu'.

In stark contrast to what had preceded, here was another side to Lior's artistry, his keening and emotionally charged voice allowing us an intimate glimpse into the rich vein of middle eastern heritage that is his birthright.

The power and spirituality of the song struck a deep resonance amongst the crowd, all of whom were captivated in spellbound rapture. For my own part, I had just experienced a small taste of a tantalising and exotic sound world and was overcome by a strange yearning to be a part of it.

Following the concert I suggested to Lior that I take a solo vocal recording of his performance and create a symphonic arrangement around it. Neither of us were sure where this might lead, but I had a hunch it was at least worth a shot.

Weaving my orchestration around Lior's voice was a little like writing a movie score, the vocal part an intractable dramatic narrative, the orchestral accompaniment a fluid underscore replete with abundant possibilities.

We could both sense potential in the finished idea and it seemed a natural progression to expand the material into a song cycle for voice and orchestra. In passing, I casually mentioned our plan to Peter Czornyj (the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's director of artistic planning) and he suggested the orchestra would be interested in bringing the idea to fruition through a commission. We set to work.

Just as our first attempt 'Avinu Malkeinu' had begun life as a solo vocal, we now followed a similar pattern for the rest of the composition process, and using the concept of compassion as a common theme, Lior proposed the texts be sourced from a combination of Hebrew and Arabic writings.

In the context of a troubled and divisive history, the drawing together of these common threads of Judaism and Islam struck me as a bold and courageous strategy, and a perfect fit for Lior's middle eastern ancestry and family history.

Through painstaking research, he managed to unearth a wonderful collection of ancient proverbs, writings and poetry. For each text he devised a vocal part which he sent me as a solo recording, sometimes embodying the germ of a melodic fragment and at other times as a complete series of mellifluous phrases.

Many of the songs sounded for all the world like ancient chants exhumed from a long-lost tomb somewhere on the shores of the Red Sea, yet the melodies were very much alive and fresh, full of richness, vibrancy and spontaneity.

It was inspiring to hear Lior working outside his comfort zone, experimenting with new vocal timbres and using his extraordinary three-octave vocal range to great effect.

Every few weeks we would get together to review progress and examine the overall form of each piece. Given our dissimilar experiences in music, I couldn't believe how we both seemed to be on the same wavelength, striving toward a common goal, critical of the same issues and agreeing on the ideas that seemed to work.

Some of the songs evolved over a period of months, others over days, but what has emerged is a true collaboration, and music that neither of us could ever have written on our own.

Compassion inhabits a vast array of emotions and colours, at times pulsating and riotous, at others reflective and textural, and draws upon the myriad influences the two of us have been able to bring to the table from our incredibly diverse backgrounds.

With the utmost respect, we have tried to imbue these ancient texts with a contemporary interpretation, adhering to the purity of a single voice and orchestra, and although the songs are all sung in their original language, there are no conscious references to traditional Hebrew or Arabic musical forms, melodies or scales (with the exception of 'Avinu Malkeinu', which is based on a traditional melody).

The support of the SSO in bringing this project to the stage has been absolutely extraordinary and Lior and I are profoundly grateful to Peter Czornyj and the orchestral management for their enthusiasm and encouragement. We would also like to thank the wonderful musicians of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for the commitment and finesse they bring to this music.

Seeing this piece come together over the past couple of years has been a major highlight in my career and it is my hope that this music might offer its listeners the space and opportunity to reflect upon the qualities of that most noble of human sentiments, the good stuff that enriches our lives with meaning, insight, depth and intrinsic worth. The virtue of compassion.

Nigel Westlake

Two Worlds in Common

The research that eventually led me to the texts threaded through *Compassion* took me far and wide, from conversations with religious leaders and linguists, to regular consultations with my good friend Waleed Aly, who took me through the finer details of Arabic pronunciation and the subtleties of the Arabic texts.

Being a fluent Hebrew speaker, I initially thought that singing some of the texts in Arabic would feel foreign and disingenuous, yet to my surprise, many of the words I encountered were common to both languages. It became clear in learning these texts that these two languages shared a deep and common source. Just as experience often validates the existence of a well-worn cliché, it is difficult to escape the analogy of two brothers starting from a common source and branching out to gather their own rich experience and identity to become what we now know as modern Hebrew and Arabic.

In time, I would also come to learn not only of the similarities in language, but in the very essence of the messages embodied throughout these proverbs and poems. What began with a feeling of trepidation as to whether Nigel and I could sincerely encapsulate the artistic concept and vision we shared for this undertaking, has ended with a full embrace and a somewhat unexpected sense of renewed optimism.

It may seem strange in the context of this work, but neither Nigel nor I consider ourselves religious people. We do, however, share a firm belief that much of the beauty and wisdom found within so many works of art and philosophy attributed to a certain religion need not lie exclusive to those who subscribe to its faith, or only to those who seek a connection with God through directional prayer. They have so much to offer to those who might accept them without bias or judgement.

Lior

1. Sim Shalom – Grant Peace

More than any of the texts used in *Compassion*, 'Sim Shalom' demonstrates that a literal translation is often inadequate in conveying the depth and richness of these texts. An example can be found in one of the stanzas relating to the vital virtues of character – 'chesed, tzedakah, u'vracha', v'rachamim' – 'charity, integrity and compassion'.

The word 'rachamim' can be quite simply translated as 'compassion'. When uncovered, however, this word has far richer and deeper meaning, being a derivation of the Hebrew word for 'womb'. More importantly, a closely related word of the same origin – 'Rachaman' – which can be translated as 'the Compassionate One', is one of the three names for God in the Jewish religion.

Interestingly, the origin, meaning and use of 'Rachaman' is almost identical between the two worlds of Judaism and Islam. Such is the centrality and esteem these two religions place on the virtue of compassion, that it is in fact one of the names given to God.

2. Eize Hu Chacham? – Who is Wise?

'Who is wise? One who learns from every man.'
Ben Zoma – Pirkei Avot 4:1

'Who is a hero? One who turns an enemy into a friend.'
Avot d'Rabbi Natan, Chapter 23: True Heroism

'Do not scorn any person and do not discount any thing. For there is no one who has not their hour, and no thing that has not its place.'
Ben Azzai – Pirkei Avot 4:3

'Eize Hu Chacham' is a collection of ethical and moral statements of the Sages taken from *Pirkei Avot – Ethics of our Fathers*. *Pirkei Avot* is a section of the *Mishna*, one of the fundamental works of the Jewish Oral Law.

Sim Shalom
Chen vachosed v'rachamim
Aleinu ve'al kol am
V'imru Amen
Sim Shalom
Aleinu ve'al kol am
Tova u'vracha
Ahavat chesed u'tzdaka
u'vracha verachamim
Vecha'im veshalom
Barchenu Avinu
Kulanu k'echad

Eize hu chacham?
Halomed mikol adam
Eize hu gibor sheba giborim
Mi she'ose soneh ohavo
Al tehi baz lechol adam
U'mafliq lechol davar
She'ein adam she'ein lo sha'ah
Ve'ein davar she'ein lo makom
Dabru emet ish et re'ehu
Emet u'mishpat shalom
Shiftu b'sha'areichem
Eile hadvarim asher ta'asu

3. La Yu'minu – Until You Love Your Brother

'None of you will have faith until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.'

Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol.1 No.12; reported by Hadhrat Anas

'Those who are merciful will be granted mercy from the Most Merciful; be merciful to those on the earth and those in the heavens will have mercy on you.'

Sunan At-Tirmidhi, Book of Righteousness, No.1924, Sahih; reported by Abdullah ibn Amr

A Hadith is a report of something the Prophet Muhammad said or did. Hundreds of thousands of these reports have been gathered together in the Hadith collections that form the basis of so much Islamic thought and teaching.

This movement, 'La Yu'minu', is a melding of two central hadiths. These two proverbs relay a simple yet universal truth, the closest approximation of the first being that of 'the golden rule': 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you', while the second speaks of what some of us might otherwise call 'karma'.

La yu'minu
Ahadukum hatta yuhibbu li akhihi
Ma yuhibbu li nafsihi
Al rahimuna yarhamuhum
Ar rahman urhamu
Man fil arda yarhamakum
Man fis samaa

4. Inna Rifqa – The Beauty Within

'Compassion does not enter into anything without beautifying it, and is not removed from anything without making it ugly.'

For several hundred years, the narrations of the Prophet were passed down via word of mouth. As time passed, and the chain of narration grew, it became more difficult to be certain of the authenticity of a hadith, and hence a rigorous science of examining the authenticity of hadiths grew.

Such was the importance placed on the science of verifying the credibility of Hadith, that it grew to become a complex academic field and for many, a lifetime's dedication and pursuit. The most authentic collection of Hadith is widely recognised as those based on the study of Imam al-Bukhari.

There is a famous story highlighting the level of Imam al-Bukhari's rigorous approach. Upon one of his journeys to seek out and examine the character of those involved in the chain of narration, al-Bukhari noticed one such person gesturing to his horse to come over to him by tricking him that there was food when in fact there was not. Al-Bukhari cited this act of trickery towards the animal as behaviour not worth of trustworthiness, and hence the chain of narration in which this man was involved was thereby deemed inauthentic.

*Inna rifqa la yakunu fi shay
Illa zanahu wa la yunza'u
min shay illa shanahu*

Hadith 6767, Sahih Muslim;
reported by A'isha

5. Al Takshu L'avchem – Don't Harden Your Hearts

'Don't harden your hearts.'
Tehilim – Book of Psalms 95:8

'Teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom.'
Tehilim – Book of Psalms 90:12

'And if a stranger is among you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.'
Leviticus 19:33

'The stranger that is among you, shall be unto you as the home-born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, for you once were also strangers.'
Leviticus 19:34

There is a beautiful quote by the Dalai Lama:
'There are no strangers, only friends you haven't yet met.'

'Fear makes strangers of people who would be friends.'
– Shirley MacLaine

6. Ma Wadani Ahadun – Until the End of Time

'None ever showed me compassion
Except that I showed them compassion until the end of time
And if someone were to show me harshness
I would pray to the most merciful to give him wisdom.'

'Ma Wadani Ahadun' is a poem written by Ali Ibn Abi Talib, a cousin of the Prophet Muhammad and the fourth Caliph after the Prophet some 1400 years ago. Widely known for his calm wisdom and use of reason in place of hot-headedness, Ali is a universally revered figure in the Muslim world: a man through whom both the Sunni and Shi'ite traditions pass, whose strong character of kindness and compassion inspires people across sectarian divides.

*Al takshu l'avachem'.
Limnot yameinu ken hoda venavi l'av
chochma.
Vekhi yagur itcha ger, be'artzechem lo
tonu oto.
K'ezrach mikem yihyeh lachem hager
hagar itchem.
Ve'ahavta lo kamocho ki gerim
ha'item.*

7. Avinu Malkeinu – Hymn of Compassion

I have vivid memories of hearing 'Avinu Malkeinu' emanating from synagogues in my childhood. The prayer is recited on Yom Kippur – The Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the Jewish year. What initially drew me to the prayer was its haunting melody, yet it was only later in life, when I learnt of its meaning and universal resonance, that I felt drawn to perform it. One such performance later came to be the very seed of this project, as Nigel and I entertained the notion of orchestrating this beautiful ancient melody which I had only ever previously performed *a cappella*.

The text of 'Avinu Malkeinu' houses a beautiful link between not only compassion and wisdom, but that of freedom. It highlights the notion of compassion being the path to liberation, a concept that has always stayed with me.

*Avinu Malkeinu chanenu v'aneinu
ki ein banu ma'asim
Aseh imanu tzedakah vachessed
ve'hoshi'enu*



Sydney Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the Sydney Opera House, where it gives more than a hundred performances each year, the SSO also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the orchestra worldwide recognition.

The SSO's first Chief Conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor from 2009 to 2013 and David Robertson takes up the post of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director in 2014. The orchestra's history also boasts collaborations with legendary figures such as George Szell, Sir Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer and Igor Stravinsky.

The orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through commissions, performances and recordings, including major works by Ross Edwards, Lee Bracegirdle, Gordon Kerry, Georges Lentz, Mary Finsterer and Andrew Schultz. In 2006 the SSO commissioned and premiered Nigel Westlake's percussion concerto, *When the Clock Strikes Me*, and in 2011 Westlake made his SSO conducting debut in a program that included his *Missa Solis – Requiem for Eli*.

SSO recordings have included two discs of music by Brett Dean (on both the BIS and Sydney Symphony Live labels). Other releases on the Sydney Symphony Live label include performances with Alexander Lazarev, Gianluigi Gelmetti and Sir Charles Mackerras, and the Mahler symphonies with Vladimir Ashkenazy. The SSO has also recorded music by Rachmaninoff, Elgar and Prokofiev for the Exton label, as well as numerous recordings on ABC Classics, including Elgar's Cello Concerto and *The Dream of Gerontius*.

Producers Nigel Westlake, Lior, Bob Scott, Brooke Green (ABC Classic FM)

Recording Engineer Bob Scott, Christian Huff-Johnston (ABC Classic FM), Steve McMillan (Sydney Opera House)

Editing, Mixing and Mastering Bob Scott

Additional Vocal Editing Lachlan Carrick

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– Lior and Nigel Westlake

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