

## **Like a Wave of the Sea** for SATB chorus and ensemble (1981)

*Like a Wave of the Sea* was commissioned by the choir of the University of Nottingham, and first performed by them in 1981. It was written as a celebration of the University's centenary and draws on the special resources of the University Music Department's ensembles: viols, recorders, baroque wind band, percussion and so on. There are two speaking parts. A chamber choir drawn from the larger choir is used for some movements; parts for solo singers, like the speakers' parts, can be taken by members of the choir.

*Like a Wave of the Sea* lasts about twenty minutes and is formed of twelve short movements.

- 1 Wandering
- 2 Finding
- 3 Knowing (i)
- 4 Believing
- 5 Giving
- 6 Resting
- 7 Dreaming
- 8 Reflecting
- 9 Being
- 10 Leaping
- 11 Knowing (ii)
- 12 Resting

*Like a Wave of the Sea* brings a number of Oriental and Western texts into juxtaposition. The texts explore aspects of belief –mystical, contemplative, celebratory, even humorous. It draws principally on the Upanishads (nos. 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 11), Sanskrit spiritual texts written over many centuries, of which the earliest date from between 800 and 400BC. Together with the Vedas, they are the most important writings of the Hindu religion. LeFanu has included also several Zen Buddhist texts (nos. 1, 7, 8, 10, 11). Western texts include The Book of Taliessin (a 6th-century Welsh bard), and the words of Christ (the speakers' parts), the Psalms, Blake (no. 5) and Lewis Carroll (nos. 4, 7, 11). The title is from a line in W. B. Yeats' poem *The Fiddler of Dooney*.

The work was written with non-professional singers and players in mind, and exploits some of the University's musical resources in innovatory ways. The chorus is required to whisper and speak as well as sing. In using the 6-part Viol Consort and a Baroque Wind Band, it imports literally some of the 16th-17th century repertory of these ensembles into the modern environment of the work. Thus the viols play part of Byrd's *In nomine a 5* (no. 1) and Purcell's *Fantasia upon one note* (no. 11), and the Wind Band plays part of the *Courante* from Locke's *Suite no. 5 in G minor* (no. 5). The work also uses 3-part recorder consort, medieval harp, an assortment of early percussion and drone instruments, and a (home-made) glass harmonica.