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# WHO WE ARE

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Music and Libretto by Glen Rhodes

(ASCAP, SOCAN) © 2019

Commissioned by Chorus Niagara, St Catharines, Ontario, Canada, 2019

Robert Cooper, Artistic Director

## Instrumentation

SOPRANO SOLO

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

CHILDREN (SA)

PIANO

TIMPANI (2)

TUBULAR BELLS

METALS – MARK TREE & METAL BAR

VIOLIN 1

VIOLIN 2

VIOLA

VIOLINCELLO

CONTRABASS

### **Glen Rhodes**

Glen Rhodes is a lifelong musician, performer, improviser and composer. Glen wrote music for the Oprah Winfrey Show from 2005 until the show ended in 2011, and his music can still be heard today on network television on many shows including Dr. Oz and Dr. Phil, as well as extensively on the Oprah Winfrey 20th anniversary DVD box set. Primetime specials featuring his music include the Oprah Legends Ball and the Martin Luther King 45th anniversary special. As a computer scientist, Glen has honed the craft of using computers to create realistic and beautiful orchestral music that sounds nearly indistinguishable from live orchestral recordings. His orchestral album, "Inward Journey", can be heard on Spotify. His recordings of instrumental tracks from *Les Misérables* have been heard on Britain's Got Talent. As a musician, Glen spent several years gigging at venues in Toronto playing keys in a band.

## Composer's Notes

*Who We Are* is a work in response to the greatest issue of our time, and our history: Human induced climate change. It explores a narrative that features three main "actors": Humanity as it stands today, the children who are the future and will inherit this planet, and the Earth herself, the soprano solo of Mother Earth.

It is a story of beauty, fragility, darkness, greed, humility, innocence, hope and ultimately redemptive optimism. It also weaves a past, present and future tale that draws inspiration from works like Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. The way it was, the way it is, the way it could be, and the way we hope it will turn out. Throughout, the elements of fire, water, air and earth are also explored.

We begin with a bit of a Greek chorus, the dire foretelling of the situation. This is who we are.

Then we emerge into a clear day. A morning being born. As mist lifts off a lake near a forest, and the world comes to life. The sun rises, and all is well. The air is clean. The water clear. Life abounds and exists in balance.

We are introduced at this point to Mother Earth. She tells us that she is concerned. She has come to realize that we have forgotten her, because we have forgotten ourselves. We have forgotten who we are.

We then segue into the dark and intense present. The insatiable thirst for *more*. The evisceration of the planet for the 'blood of the Earth', oil and carbon, which now literally flows through us. The chorus sings a frenzy of greed. One more dollar, one more dollar, one more dollar - and the checklist of items being traded for dollars, which are a meaningless representation of the irreplaceable. An attempt to place value on the finite.

*One More Dollar* is told in three sections: What humanity draws from this frenzy, what the environment loses, and what nature becomes, as a result. All the while, the children and Mother Earth cry out. Everything spirals until we descend into total collapse. The Earth cries, then an *adagio* lament. Her heart is broken and betrayed.

In a moment of clarity, we begin to ask ourselves, who are we? What have we become?

Then, with hope, the children tell us of their *prayer*, and their *dream*. Their *prayer* is that we will realize we are just like them; children of this world. Separated by age, but not by burden and need. Their *dream* is that they might inherit the world as it was. Clean, whole, and as every child yearns for: safe.

Mother Earth then reminds us, that she has given us everything, and she is nearly spent. But she still has hope, and she still believes. We rise into a moment of optimism. A maybe? A, could we?

Then the doomsday clock – the 11<sup>th</sup> hour. The bell tolls 11 times, as we race toward midnight, and all that we've ever been, everything that matters: art, culture, music, science, flashes before our eyes like the final moments of life. This is the dark reality. Humanity deconstructs, swirling like we may have just been some deity's bad dream.

And then, we awaken from this dream. Hope. The rain falls, the fire dies, and we begin to watch the potential for healing. The children sing. And we realize and remember – we are not destroyers. We are creators. We strive. We thrive. We rise above. We persevere. We have been to the stars and have conquered death. We have beat the odds before, and now we realize that we can find our way. If we stand as one.

### **That is who we are.**

Musically, this work follows an ebb and flow of motion, and pause. Of hurrying, and then breathing. Of excitement and then calm. Panic and reprieve. As such, the dynamics range from *p* to *ff*, but there may be more range to be found. Some moments are a whisper, some are a thunder. The text and the music give the cues. There are cesuras throughout. These should be long enough to take a breath and reflect. One second or so.

Leading into section K, the soprano solo should ring through and fade out after the choir and orchestra, lingering in the air. After the last bell tolls at section L, the pause should feel deliberately long. Three seconds or so. As if, maybe this is the end? Then in a whisper, we awaken from the nightmare and realize there *is still hope*.

# Libretto

## CHOIR

This is who we are.

New day, life awakens.  
Blue moon fades away.  
Air is clean. Mist is cool.  
Sky is bright. All is calm.  
Breathe, breathe.  
The day is born, the clouds ignite,  
the Earth is alive.  
She is alive.

## MOTHER EARTH

Children, do you think of me?  
Children, do you care for me?  
I think you've forgotten who I am.  
I think you've forgotten who you are.

## CHOIR

Who we are.

The fire burns.  
The blood of the Earth,  
It flows through me!

One more dollar.  
One more...

Ignis natura renovatur integra.  
*(Through fire nature is reborn whole)*

Pecuniam plus Deo, pecuniam plus Deo.  
*(More money than God)*

One more dollar, one more barrel.  
One more dollar, one more bottle.  
One more dollar, one more factory.  
One more dollar, one more landfill.  
One more dollar, one more oil spill.  
One more dollar, one more megawatt.  
One more dollar, one more bottom line.  
One more dollar, one more billionaire.

One more dollar, one more flood.  
One more dollar, one more dry spell.  
One more dollar, one more heatwave.  
One more dollar, one more wildfire.  
One more dollar, one more refugee.  
One more dollar, one more glacier.  
One more dollar, one more cyclone.  
One more dollar, one more hurricane.

One more dollar, one more species.  
One more dollar, one more forest.

One more dollar,  
one more habitat.

One more dollar,  
one more wasteland.

One more dollar,  
one more ecosystem.

One more dollar,  
one more famine.

One more dollar, one more victim.  
One more dollar, one more death!

## CHILDREN

Save us now!

## CHOIR

Plunder, steal and tear asunder.  
Tears of blackened rain and  
thunder.

Quaking ship that  
sinks beneath us.  
One last chance for us!

Do we know who we are?  
Can we change? Can we learn?  
Do we try?

## CHILDREN & CHOIR

One last dream. One last prayer.

This is my prayer: That you will see  
That you are a child of this world  
just like me.

This is your prayer: That I will see  
that I am a child of this world just  
like you.

This is your prayer:  
That we will see  
that we are all one with this world,  
we are one...

## MOTHER EARTH

Children of mine I gave you life. I  
give you all that I am.

I pray for you. Please pray for me.  
I still have hope. We are one...

## CHOIR

Point of no return.

## MOTHER EARTH

I think you've forgotten who you are.

## CHOIR

A cool wind blows. The clouds appear.  
A silver shroud upon the shore,  
that bears the rain.  
The fire dies. The trees exhale.  
Her wounds are soothed,  
the Earth is healed,  
the children sing.

## CHILDREN

This is my dream:  
To live a life like you did when you were  
like me.

## CHOIR

We ask ourselves Just who we are.  
We have beat the odds for a million years  
and fought for what was right.

As forests grow, and mountains rise,  
tomorrow calls on us today  
to find our way.

## MOTHER EARTH

Children of mine please save yourselves!  
I think you remember who you are.

## ALL

We sing with hope, we stand as one.  
We have conquered death,  
we have reached the stars,

That's who we are.  
That's who we are!