# And I, Joseph

### Carol for SATB (with divisions) and organ

winner of the Bach Choir Sir David Willcocks Carol Competition 2023

## Nicholas Ansdell-Evans

#### And I, Joseph

'And Joseph went out to find a midwife in the country of Bethlehem' (James Pr.-ev. 18 v. 1)

This carol is about the moment of Jesus's birth and about how God comes to us in stillness.

The text is taken from the Protogospel (infancy gospel) of James. This is a 2nd century document which, beginning with the birth of Mary, recounts events before, during and after the birth of Christ.

Joseph is travelling to Bethlehem for the census with Mary and his two sons by his first marriage. They have almost arrived when Mary says she is about to give birth. Joseph, afraid in case his relations in Bethlehem see Mary, leaves her with his sons in a cave, and goes out to find a midwife. While he is walking, he sees everything suddenly come to a complete halt, and for an instant the entire world is motionless: the birds are at a standstill unmoving in the sky, some men who are eating have hands poised in mid-air, a flowing stream halts. Then everything continues as before. Joseph realises that in this moment the birth has taken place, and that for a second he has slipped into eternity.

Rowan Williams discusses this passage in his book Silence and Honey Cakes (p.111).

In this setting, throughout the carol Joseph hears his name being called, as if by Mary or by an angel.

And I, Joseph, was walking, and I stood still, And I looked up to the pole of heaven, but it did not move, And I looked up to the sky above, and the sky was amazed, And the birds of heaven hung motionless on the wing.

And I looked on the earth and saw labourers sitting at a meal, And they were lifting their food from the dish, and their hands did not move, And they were eating and were not eating, and they were tasting and were not tasting, But all faces gazed silently at the sky.

And I looked and saw sheep walking, and the sheep stood still, And I saw a shepherd smiting them with his staff, and his hand stuck fast, And I looked at the flowing river and saw the goats with their lips on the water, And they did not drink, and the stream did not flow.

For all things in amazement were halted in their course.

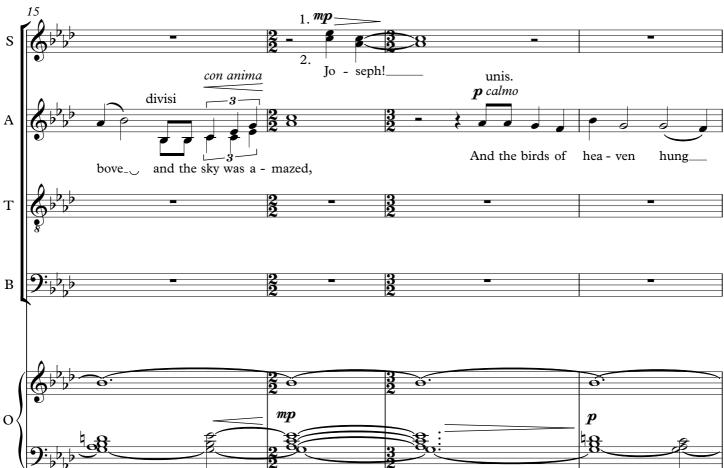
James Protoevangelium ch. 18 (composer's own translation)

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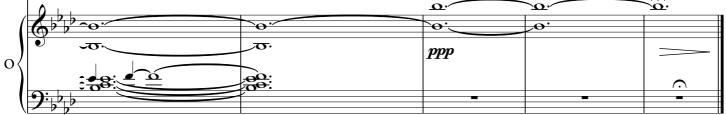






Quite slow (slower and more distant





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