

Halfway to Heaven

Lyric Book

Created and composed by Emily Peasgood

Lyrics by Emily Peasgood, Kate Harwood, Daniel Wright-Hadley and Eleanor Rudd
Commissioned by The Creative Foundation for Folkestone Triennial 2017

Dedicated to the forgotten Baptist Burial Ground on
Bradstone Road in Folkestone, and all interred within



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Halfway to Heaven is a 5-channel choral work and sound installation created in response to an invitation from Folkestone Baptist Church and The Bradstone (residents) Association to celebrate the Baptist Burial Ground, an inaccessible 'island' for almost 150 years. I researched some of the people buried in the Baptist Burial Ground using their grave markers and created a choral work and sound installation that plays on sensing the presence of people. To hear all 5 channels as a unified work, several people need to work together.

The Baptist Burial Ground came into existence in the mid 1700s. At the time, the Church of England was the dominant governing religion and anyone who did not conform to its governance was labelled a nonconformist. Nonconformists were often discriminated against and excluded from many areas of public life. In a way, they had 'civil' disabilities: they could not study for a degree, enter a civil service career, access public office, or be buried in consecrated Anglican churchyards. This resulted in communities of nonconformists creating small burial grounds to bury their dead. The Baptist Burial Ground was situated in the garden of miller and Baptist John Stace, whose daughter was the first to be buried there in 1747. Between 1747 and the 1850s, approximately 70 people were interred there. When the Pent Valley was cut away in the late 1800s, the burial ground was left stranded as an 'island'. Since, time passed and Folkestone evolved. The burial ground grew into disrepair and was eventually forgotten by the town and its people, who often walked by unaware of or curious about its existence as it watched over Folkestone. When I think of the reason Baptists were buried there I see a comparison with the political and economic climate in the United Kingdom today, where people are often discriminated against because of their identity and beliefs. Like the Baptists, these people sit at the edge of society. The Baptists did not believe in the hierarchical structure of the Anglican Church, and felt children shouldn't be baptised until they were old enough to choose for themselves. They believed, and still do, in free will, community and equality. *Halfway to Heaven* explores how we can treat fellow citizens with equality and acceptance, and create a community. It explores how we can as a society collectively forget events of the past; events that repeat themselves in many ways but often for the same reason: 'difference'. Difference can so easily divide us but it doesn't need to. We are all the same: we are all people.

The lyrics were created with Kate Harwood, Daniel Wright-Hadley and Eleanor Rudd. They speak of the history of those interred and contain *Thomas and Susannah*, a poem depicting an imagined love story about the only people interred with a living relative. *Thomas and Susannah* symbolizes the relationship between people and God and is a personal homage to those buried in the Baptist Burial Ground. The lyrics are first presented in the order they are sung: fragments of history interspersed with *Thomas and Susannah*. *Thomas and Susannah* is presented alone on page 12. The lyrics focus on community and equality, values that are not only important to the Baptists but to us, today, regardless of our background and identity. In *Halfway to Heaven* all are equal regardless of their background, identity, beliefs, life or death.

Halfway to Heaven



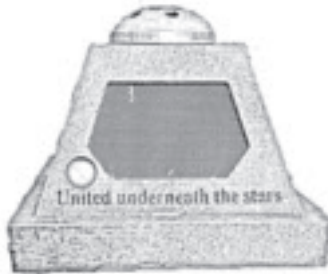
Here lie a beloved father and mother.

William Pledge died on September the 30th in 1856, in his 82nd year.

Mary Pledge died on January 20th, in 1858, in her 87th year.

Here lie their beloved children: Mary aged sixteen months,

William Thompson aged 6 years, Thomas aged 7.



Here lie Elizabeth and William King.

Elizabeth died in spring on the 18th of April, in 1830, in her 63rd year.

William died on the 25th of August in 1836, in his 69th year.

And there lies the vault of the Finn family.

Interred within are the mortal remains of Bennet, Thomas, John and Mary.



Here lieth the body of Bennet, wife of John Stace.

She departed this life on February 17th, in 1747, in her 68th year.

John Stace departed this life on August the 18th 1754, in his 68th year.

John and Bennet left four children behind: Elizabeth, Phebe, John and Bennet.



Here lie Joseph and Maria Parkins,

beside the mortal remains of William Harvey Stace,
who departed this life on the 20th of November, 1850, in his 59th year.

Nearby lie Thomas and Susannah Bayly.

They married on the 11th of May, in 1782.

Thomas was a grocer and tallowchandler in Folkestone.

He passed away in 1811.



Here lies the body of James Viney who died in 1833, in his 15th year.
There lies Macdonald West, who died on the 17th of January,
in 1856, aged 42nd years.

Peace
Being dead yet speaketh
We gather together
Being dead yet speaketh

1

It was a clear summer's night when I first met my love;
she lay on the ground calm and fair
She smiled and lifted her eyes to mine when I asked: "What do you there?"
"I'm listening to the earth, and feeling the sky, before the day is done;
United, underneath the stars where everything is one"

2

"Close your eyes and see for yourself, come sit with me for a while"
All my hopes and all of my dreams were gathered in her smile
Before that day my life was but a sad and lonely song,
United, underneath the stars, I found where I belong
United underneath the stars, where everything is one

3

We listened to the earth and felt the sky, and talked through all the night
Until the sun rose in the East and filled the world with light
We walked together hand in hand, as many before had done
United, underneath the stars, two paths became one

4

In times of sorrow she would say: "be brave, be kind, be true
Be thankful for the little things and they will see you through
Listen to the earth, and feel the sky, before each day is done
United, underneath the stars, soon our time will come"



William and Mary lost four children: Mary aged 16 months,
William Thompson aged 6, Thomas aged 7 years.



Interred within the Finn family vault are the mortal remains of Bennet,
wife of Thomas, who died aged 79 years.

5



Nearby lie the remains of John and Bennet's daughter Mary, who departed this life aged 29 years.



Susannah Bayly passed away in spring, in April 1829. She was a devoted member of the church for many years.



Ebenezer died aged 2 years, Catherine died aged 9 years, Isabella died aged 4 years.

5

She died in spring when the songbirds sing, and blossoms flow'r on the tree
Before she left she held my hand, and spoke these words to me:
"Where you are, is where I'll be, I won't be truly gone
United, underneath the stars, we'll always be as one"

6

But when the frost of winter came I found myself alone
Without her faith to guide the way and love to guide me home
Had once again my life become a song so sad and cold?
No more to feel her gentle touch, no more her hand to hold



Thomas Finn, husband of Bennet, died aged 87 years,
and John Finn, son of Thomas and Bennet, died aged 74 years,
and also his wife Mary. They had 7 children: Thomas, George,
Bennet, Harvey, Mary, John and Hannah.



Here lieth the body of **Bennet**, wife of John Stace
She departed this life on February 17th 1747, in her 68th year.
She left behind one son and three daughters: Elizabeth, Phebe, John and Bennet.



Thomas and Susannah had 9 children: Susanna, Thomas, Elizabeth,
John, Samuel, Richard, Stephen, Ebenezer and Ann.



Here lie Joseph and Maria Parkins.
Here lies the body of James Viney who died in 1833, in his 15th year.
There lies Macdonald West, and his three children.

7

I saw her face in crowded streets, and in the clouds above
 Seasons passed and still I could not find my one true love
 Until one spring a welcome sight gave answer to my prayer;
 I saw a maiden calm and fair and asked: "What do you there?"

Being dead yet speaketh
 We gather together
 Being dead yet speaketh

8

She turned to me and this she said: "Be brave, be kind, be true
 Be thankful for the little things and they will see you through
 Listen to the earth and feel the sky, before the day is done
 For where you are is where I am, and now your time has come"



Here lie William and Mary Pledge, rest in peace.



Here lie Elizabeth and William King. Rest in peace.
There lie Bennet and Thomas Finn, And John and Mary Finn.
May they rest in peace.



Here lieth Bennet and John Stace. May they rest in peace.
Nearby lies Mary Stace. May she rest in peace.



Here lie Joseph and Maria Parkins. May they rest in peace.
Here lie Thomas and Susannah. May they rest in peace.



Here lies James Viney. May he rest in peace.
There lies Isabella and Catherine and Ebenezer. May they rest in peace.

9

And now we lie beneath the ground where once we sat for a while;
Where all my hopes and all my dreams were gathered in her smile
For where she is, is where I am, and where our path begun
United, underneath the stars, united here as one

10

Years are like the shadows of time that soon are old
A love, a dream, a song, a story, in whispers softly told
The earth, the sky, the sun forget whose journey here is done
Have faith that love will never be what flesh and bone become

As time passes so will we
To a place where only closed eyes see
Where you are is where I'll be

Being dead yet speaketh
We gather together



11

Thomas and Susannah

It was a clear summer's night when I first met my love; she lay on the ground calm and fair
She smiled and lifted her eyes to mine when I asked: "What do you there?"

"I'm listening to the earth, and feeling the sky, before the day is done;
United, underneath the stars where everything is one"

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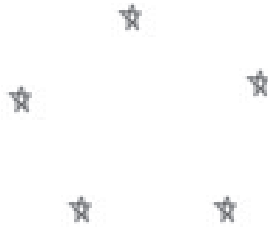
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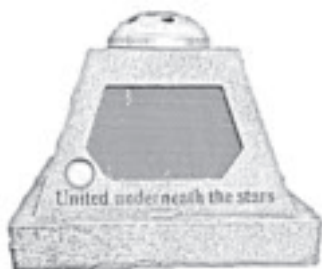
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Designed by Emily Peasgood
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