



# Jonathan Dove

## The Far Theatricals of Day

For soprano, alto, tenor and bass soloists, choir, brass quintet and organ

Poems by Emily Dickinson

*Commissioned by The John Armitage Memorial and The Arts Patrons' Trust.*

*In memory of Christopher Whelen, Composer/Conductor (1927-1993)*

Like Mighty Foot Lights – burned the Red

At Bases of the Trees –

The far Theatricals of Day

Exhibiting – to Thee

It is easy to see what attracts composers to the work of Emily Dickinson: often in a hymn-like metre, her poems look like songs; words of apparent simplicity, sometimes childlike, sometimes profoundly mysterious, that explode with a dramatic, visionary intensity. Knowing that most of these poems remained hidden until after her death only adds to the composer's pleasure in giving voice to them now: of the eleven I have set in this cycle, only one was published in her lifetime.

*The Far Theatricals of Day* begins and ends with a solo soprano singing a child's words – by all accounts, Emily Dickinson was a funny, original, high-spirited girl, and I hope this cycle conveys something of her extraordinary personality.

The title was offered to me by Dennis Andrews, one of the commissioners of this work. Although I haven't set the poem from which it comes, this single line suggested a cycle of songs starting before dawn and ending at midnight, and one which might include an element of theatre in performance. It seemed an apt shape for a commemorative piece celebrating the life of a fellow-composer.

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