



# The Angel in the Forest

Julian Marshall

---

James Gilchrist

Chamber Players of the Philharmonia Orchestra

The Rupa Ensemble

## THE ANGEL IN THE FOREST

**Julian Marshall (b.1954)**

*Original poem by Gertrud Kolmar*

1	Give me your Hand	4.49
2	Come, Autumn	4.57
3	Because the Sun	5.59
4	Perhaps	5.04
5	Your Arms	5.45

**Total time**

**26.34**

Chamber Players of the Philharmonia Orchestra

The Rupa Ensemble

James Gilchrist, *tenor*

## **An introduction to The Welten Project**

“To live with our shadow is to understand how human beings live at a frontier between light and dark”. (David Whyte)

In November 2007 I stumbled across the poetry and published letters of Gertrud Kolmar and found myself deeply drawn into her world, her life and work. Her capacity to evoke exceptionally vivid, awakened experience through the alchemical, imaginal wonders of poetry shone out to me with palpable force.

Kolmar's 17-poem cycle, *Welten*, attracted me as an especially compelling body of work and I soon decided to set the poem *Aus dem Dunkel* (in English translation) as the main text for a work that became the cantata *Out of the Darkness*<sup>1</sup>. *Out of the Darkness* was written for solo soprano, small SATB vocal ensemble and two cellos.

I was most fortunate, early on in the writing process, to be introduced to soprano Melanie Pappenheim, for whom I wrote the soprano part.

Melanie recommended singers for the vocal group (who later became the Schoolhouse 6 Ensemble) and introduced me to the cellist Sophie Harris, who, together with Lucy Railton, formed our cello duo.

*Out of the Darkness* was premiered in Winchester Cathedral on the 19th March, 2009.

It wasn't long before I set about composing a second piece, also setting text from *Welten*, now much aided by a new translation of the entire cycle by Philip Kuhn and Ruth Von Zimmermann<sup>2</sup>. The featured poem for this work was *Der Engel im Walde* (*The Angel in the Forest*) and became a second cantata, this time written for the tenor, James Gilchrist, small ATB chorus and cello sextet.

*The Angel in the Forest*<sup>3</sup> received its first full premiere at St James's Church, Piccadilly on the 21st January, 2012, with James Gilchrist, soloist, Sophie Harris (leading the cello sextet), the Schoolhouse 6 Ensemble (chorus) and Ian Belton, conducting.

After composing *The Angel in the Forest*, my composing interests diversified and further Kolmar works were set aside while I pursued other compositional interests. The first lockdown of 2020, however, presented me with the opportunity to thoroughly re-appraise my creative intentions and one particular result of this was a reanimation of my commitment to developing new Kolmar pieces. Collaborating with some remarkable creative partners, 2022 saw two new Kolmar works come to fruition:

*Yearning* (a film) – a danced-inspired reimagination of the poem of the same name and a collaboration with choreographer Daisy Brodskis, dancer Hannah Rudd, and cinematographer Miguel Altunaga. The film can be seen at: [www.blueberrylakearts.com/venue](http://www.blueberrylakearts.com/venue)

*Garden in Summer* – a recorded spoken word and music piece with music by Julian Marshall, performer Avigail Tlalim and director Anastasia Bruce-Jones. This work will receive its full premiere, along with an ep of additional work, in the late spring of 2023.

The opportunity to record *The Angel in the Forest* in the summer of 2022, came as the result of a long-held dream of mine and I am privileged indeed to have been able to realise this project not only with James Gilchrist, for whom I wrote the work, as soloist but also with such an esteemed group of players and singers.

To acknowledge this growing body of work *The Welten Project* has now been adopted as an inclusive title for all works inspired by, re-imagining or setting poems from *Welten*, the 17-poem cycle by Gertrud Kolmar.

## Why Kolmar? Why Welten?

The above quote by David Whyte succinctly points towards a central inspiration behind the works of *The Welten Project*: that is, exploring the idea that we do indeed live at 'a frontier between light and dark'. Gertrud Kolmar's vivid reflections on human experience, set as they are among the unspeakable oppressions of 1930s Germany, offer a profound vehicle for exploring these themes. The *Welten* cycle presents a compelling opportunity for creating work of re-imagination and ekphrasis – plus, in addition, act as a springboard and inspiration for wholly original work. Despite being written in 1937, Kolmar's *Welten* cycle offers a body of work of remarkable universality and abundant resonance with our world today.

Art's remarkable ability to evoke the multi-hued ambiguities of experience, to lay bare the 'radical mystery of existence' as J F Martel puts it<sup>4</sup>, speaks to qualities that, in my view, become immediately recognisable in Kolmar's work – and throw down a most compelling gauntlet to any artist or composer following in her wake.

For full details and news relating to all Julian Marshall music and events please see [www.blueberrylakearts.com](http://www.blueberrylakearts.com)

© Julian Marshall, August 2022

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Out of the Darkness* is published by Novello and Co and is available as a recording (MMC Recordings) on CD and via streaming platforms.
- <sup>2</sup> *Welten* – Gertrud Kolmar. Translated by Philip Kuhn and Ruth von Zimmermean. Published by *Shearsman Books*.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Angel in the Forest* is published by Novello and Co.
- <sup>4</sup> *Reclaiming Art in the Age of Artifice*, J F Martel, 2015

*The Angel in the Forest*, following on from Julian Marshall's first Kolmar Cantata, *Out of the Darkness*, is also taken from the Welten cycle and serves as the text for Julian's second Kolmar Cantata. It offers a disturbing if understated glimpse into the nightmare world about to engulf Europe. As with *Out of the Darkness*, *The Angel in the Forest* suggests that a new life can be found in an escape from the city. But refuge is to be discovered not in the mountains but in the countryside which holds the promise of an innocent, perhaps even prelapsarian world, with its "musing fields", flowers and grass: a place where the animals "don't speak evil". And yet at the heart of this poem, is something perhaps even more disturbing than *Out of the Darkness* because the early promise of hope bound up with the protagonists' ability to escape, is slowly eroded at every turn.

*The Angel in the Forest* appears to offer its readers little or no solace other than the imagined possibility that comfort-from-hardship could still be found in a steadfast companion. But even that promise appears to be cut away at the end of the poem. "We will thirst and hunger, suffer together / Together, one day, sink down by the dusty wayside verge and weep...". And yet this powerful ending seems also to suggest an allusion to the opening of Psalm 137: "By the rivers of Babylon / There we sat / sat and wept / as we thought of Zion". If this was Kolmar's conscious intent, then it is precisely through this final reference that the poem succeeds in turning its moment of despair into yet another promise of something "other". By transposing the allusion away from the waters of Babylon onto the dusty wayside of a seemingly infinite road Kolmar might well be suggesting that even at the depth of despair this place of the poem's ending is, in fact, merely a resting place: a place to take stock, in order to remember "Zion", to mourn for what is lost and thus, through renewed strength, continue onwards.

This is Julian Marshall's second passionate engagement with another significant fragment from Kolmar's neglected and often forgotten writings. As in his first cantata, Julian has again paid tribute to the poet's remarkable and powerful feminine creativity and, in so doing, succeeds in commemorating Kolmar's life so cruelly silenced at the very moment she seemed to be about to peer into and articulate its very depth.

© Philip Kuhn, September 2018 – abridged from programme note

### **A brief note on the life of Gertrud Kolmar**

Gertrud Chodziesner was born on 10 December 1894 into a Jewish family in Berlin. After training as a teacher, she worked with orphaned and disadvantaged children until an ill-fated love affair with a non-Jewish army officer resulted in an abortion and subsequent suicide attempt. After the Armistice in 1918, she found work as a private tutor and governess until the autumn of 1927 when she attended a vacation course at Dijon University. But her time in France was curtailed when she was obliged to return home to nurse her mother. Following her mother's death in March 1930, Gertrud assumed full-time responsibilities for the family household in Finkenkrug, an idyllic rural suburb of Berlin.

While living in Finkenkrug, Gertrud (under the pen-name Kolmar) composed nearly all her important works: not only the novel *Die Jüdische Mutter* (*The Jewish Mother*, 1930), the drama *Cécile Renault* (1935), the historical study on Robespierre (*Das Bildnis Robespierres*, 1934) and the dramatic legend *Nacht* (*Night*, 1938), but also her eight cycles of poetry: – the nineteen sonnet (plus one) *Bild der Rose* (*Image of the Rose*, c.1932), the nineteen poem cycle *Napoleon und Marie*, the forty-five poem cycle *Robespierre*, the fifty-three poem cycle *Alte Stadwappen*, (*Old Municipal Coats of Arms*), the seventy-five poem cycle *Weibliches Bildnis* (*Female Portraits*), the twenty-nine poem cycle *Mutter und Kind* (*Mother and Child*), the forty-eight poem cycle *Tierträume*

(Animal Dreams) and finally *Welten* (Worlds), the seventeen poem cycle which she wrote between 17 August and 30 December 1937. Although she would subsequently write the extraordinary novella *Susanna* (1940), *Welten* was to be her last collection of poetry.

In July 1941, Gertrud was conscripted to a munitions' factory. Just over a year later, her father was deported to Theresienstadt and finally, in late February 1943, Gertrud herself was arrested and deported to Auschwitz where, had she managed to survive the nightmare journey east, she would have been selected, on arrival, for immediate extermination.

© Philip Kuhn, 29 September 2010/08 January 2012

This short note is extracted from *Sein Antlitz ist Lei/His Countenance is Sorrow*, Philip Kuhn's full-length essay on the life and work of Gertrud Kolmar, originally published in a limited edition by *itinerant press* to mark the world premiere of Julian Marshall's *Out of the Darkness*.

### **The Angel in the Forest**

Give me your hand, the dear hand, and come with me;

Because we want to walk away from the people.

They are small and wicked, and their small wickedness detests and  
torments us,

Their spiteful eyes creep around our face, and their  
greedy ear gropes the word of our mouth.

They gather henbane ...

So let us flee

To the musing fields, which congenially console our roaming feet  
with flowers and grass,

To the river, patiently bearing on its back heaving  
burdens, heavy freight-bursting ships,



To the animals of the forest who don't speak evil.

Come.

Autumn mist veils and dampens the moss with a dull  
emerald glow.

Beech leaves roll, an abundance of gold-bronze coins.

In front of our steps leaps a red quivering flame,  
the squirrel.

By the mire, black winding alders lick upwards into  
copper evening splendour.

Come.

Because the sun has crept down into its hollow, and its  
warm reddish breath has floated away.

Now a vault opens up.

Under its grey-blue arc, between crowned columns  
of trees, the angel will stand,

Tall and slender without wings.

His countenance is sorrow.

And his robe has the pallor of icy gleaming stars in  
winter nights.

The Being,

Who does not say, no should, who just *is*,

Who knows no curse, brings no blessings and does not surge into cities,  
towards that which dies:

He does not behold us

In his silver silence.

But we behold him,

Because we are two and forsaken.

Perhaps

A brown faded leaf blows against his shoulder, slides down;  
We want to pick this up and keep it, before we move on.

Come with me, my friend, come.

The stairs in my father's house are dark and crooked  
and narrow, and the steps are worn;

But now it is the house of the orphan and strangers live  
in it.

Take me away.

The old rusty key in the gate hardly obeys my  
feeble hands.

Now it creaks shut.

Now look at me in the darkness, you, from today  
my home.

Because your arms shall build me sheltering walls,  
And your heart will be my chamber and your eye my  
window through which the morning shines.

And the forehead towers up as you stride.

You are my house on all the streets of the world, in every valley,  
on every hill.

You roof, you will thirst wearily with me under sweltering midday,  
shiver with me when snow storm whips.

We will thirst and hunger, suffer together,

Together, one day, sink down by the dusty wayside verge and  
weep...

The text for *The Angel in the Forest* is taken from Philip Kuhn's and Ruth von Zimmermann's translation of *Welten*, by Gertrud Kolmar, published by Shearsman Books. Used here with permission and grateful thanks.

## **Julian Marshall**

### *Composer*

Shortly after graduating from the Royal College of Music, Julian's professional life as a composer and songwriter took flight in the late 1970s with the internationally successful bands Marshall Hain, The Flying Lizards and Eye to Eye.

His compositions include work for film and theatre and a new chapter as a composer of longer-form work (the cantatas *Out of the Darkness*, *The Angel in the Forest*), along with other choral-based pieces, began in 2009.

In 2021 he formed Blueberry Lake Arts – a production home and on-line performance space for new work, solo and collaborative. BLA is also host and home to The Welten Project – an evolving, arts-based initiative founded by Julian Marshall October in 2021. The Welten Project mission is to conduct research and produce a series of works inspired by re-imagining or setting poems from *Welten*, the 17-poem cycle by Gertrud Kolmar.

Julian teaches and coaches creatives of all ages. He is a Teaching Fellow at ICMP, London.

For more information, please see [www.blueberrylakearts.com](http://www.blueberrylakearts.com)

@ Jamie Wright



## **James Gilchrist**

*Tenor*

Tenor James Gilchrist began his working life as a doctor, turning to a full-time music career in 1996. His musical interest was fired at a young age, singing first as a chorister in the choir of New College, Oxford and later as a choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge.

His extensive concert repertoire has seen him perform in major concert halls throughout the world with renowned conductors including Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Sir Roger Norrington, Harry Bicket, Harry Christophers and the late Richard Hickox. He is considered a master of English music, and equally at home in Baroque repertoire – the *St John* and *St Matthew Passions* feature prominently in his schedule.

Highlights have included singing the role of Rev. Adams in Britten's *Peter Grimes* for Deborah Warner's acclaimed production, in company debuts at the Teatro Real, Madrid and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, as well as with Bergen Philharmonic and Edward Gardner with performances at the Edinburgh International Festival, Royal Festival Hall, Grieghallen and Den Norske Opera; Haydn's *Creation* for a staged production with Garsington Opera and Ballet Rambert; a European tour of Bach's *St John Passion* with Bach Collegium Japan and Masaaki Suzuki, and a return to King's College, Cambridge to perform *St Matthew Passion* as part of Stephen Cleobury's final Easter week as Director of Music.

James' impressive discography includes recordings of *Albert Herring* (title role), Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel*, and solo disc *Solitude* with pianist and long-time collaborator Anna Tilbrook, including a new work by Jonathan Dove, all for Chandos Records, *St John Passion* with the AAM, Vaughan Williams *On Wenlock Edge*, and Britten's *Winter Words* for Linn Records, and the critically-acclaimed recordings of Schubert's song cycles for Orchid Classics.

@ Patrick Allen



Chamber Players of the Philharmonia Orchestra:  
Karen Stephenson, *principal*  
Tamsy Kaner  
Yaroslava Trofymchuk  
Tessa Seymour  
Abi Hyde-Smith  
Alexander Rolton

© Louis Norris



Members of The Rupa Ensemble:  
Miranda Ostler, *mezzo soprano*  
Jack Harberd, *tenor*  
David Valsamidis, *bass*  
Julian Marshall, *director & bass*





Producer: Julian Marshall & Jonas Persson

Engineer: Jonas Persson

Recorded at St Michael and All Angels Church,  
Blackheath and Berners Street Studio, August 2022

Cover art: Rod Nelson, ARE

**Grateful thanks to:**

For The Philharmonia: Bekah Cork, Juliette Reid, Stephen Buck, Kenneth Chung

For James Gilchrist: Camilla Wehmeyer and Evangeline Parker at Camilla Wehmeyer Management

Matthew Trusler and all the team at Orchid Classics.

John Cronin at Music and Media Consulting.

Marion Lane – St Michael and All Angels Church, Blackheath.

Mike Ormerod – for incomparable logistical and personal support.

Rod Nelson – for his incredible woodcut inspired by his attendance at The Angel in the Forest premiere. The central image from his artwork has now become the feature of our cover art.

James Gilchrist – for his unwavering enthusiasm and support in having The Angel take flight.

Jenny Beavan – who's sponsorship of the Philharmonia cellos is most deeply appreciated.

Jonas Persson – for simply being a genius and for being the loveliest presence in all recording situations!

To all our incredible players and singers whos' enthusiastic engagement made this project such a joy to record.

For more information on Orchid Classics please visit

**[www.orchidclassics.com](http://www.orchidclassics.com)**

You can also find us on Facebook, Twitter,  
Instagram and our YouTube channel

Made in the EU © and © 2022 Orchid Music Limited

