PROGRAMME NOTE

1. The Miracle Tree 1

2. The trees are troubled 7

3. Vigil. 17

4. The tree is a changing sky . . 26

5. Bushes and Briars 32

The idea for this collaboration first came about in 2009, when the Coull Quartet approached me about writing a work with Fiona Sampson. The quartet, Fiona and I discussed at length what form the piece might take, and after some months, Fiona sent me three 'tree' poems. I felt I could respond to them immediately. Once I started to write the music, though, I realised more poems would be needed, and Fiona created two more to complete the set.

I asked to write for Roderick Williams, and the settings are written very much with his voice in mind. I know Roddy's voice well, as he created the role of Byron in my opera with Janice Galloway, *Monster*, in 2002. The songs tend to feature the higher register of the baritone range.

The first poem is set against a string 'shimmer' with small solos breaking through. The second is a cannon, building with gusts which hover around an unsettled 'heartbeat' rhythm in 5/8 time. The central movement is recitative-like, with aggressive chordal interjections from the strings, containing a brief lullaby interlude before the angry mood returns. The fourth song is characterised by wide, searching intervals and pulsing chords. The work finishes with a song accompanied by birdcalls overlapping in a circular canon, with raw rising fifths.

Sally Beamish, 2013

Commissioned by the University of Warwick

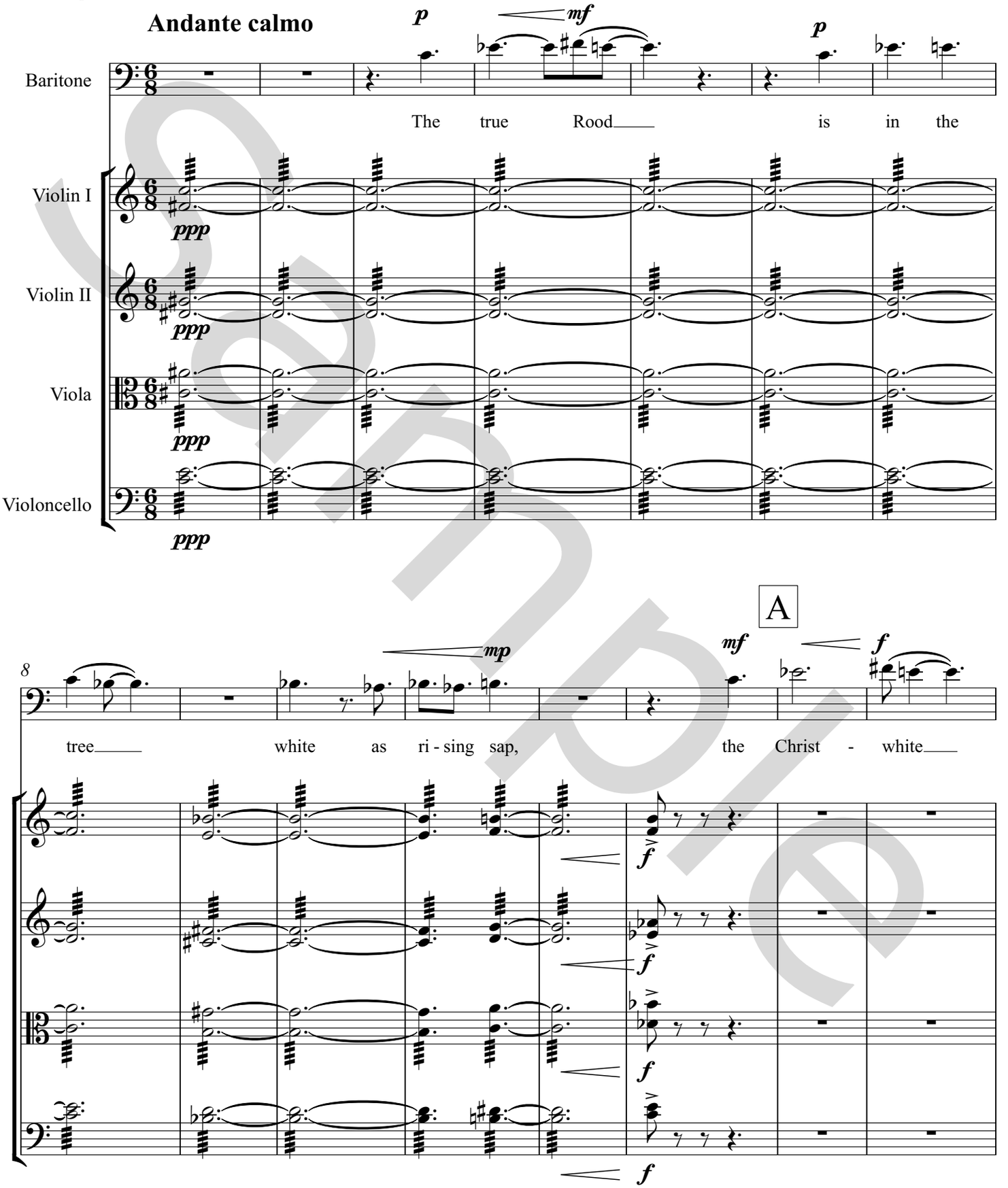
First performed by the Coull Quartet with Roderick Williams (baritone)
on 5th March 2014 at Warwick Arts Centre, University of Warwick

Tree Carols

1. The Miracle Tree

Fiona Sampson

Sally Beamish



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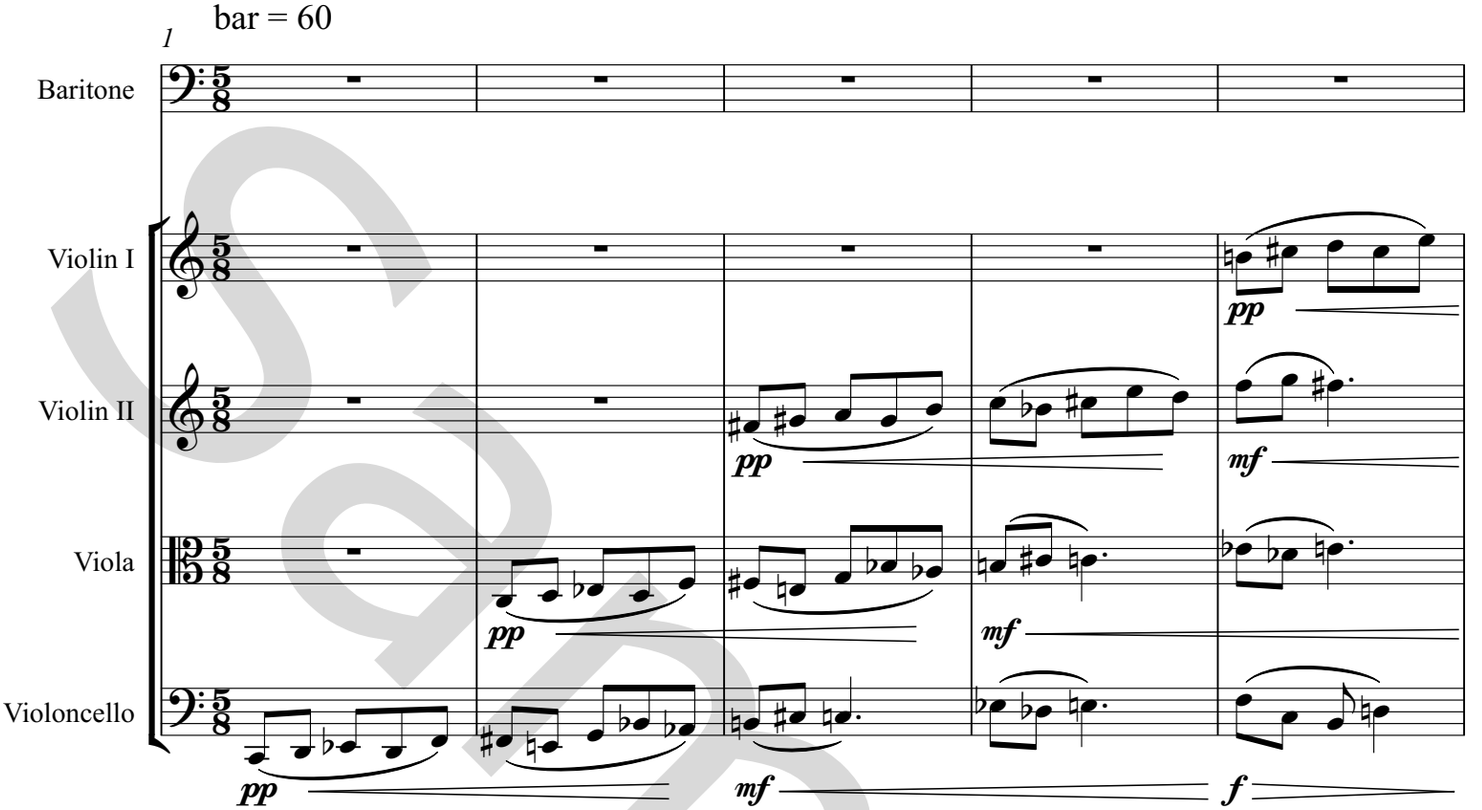
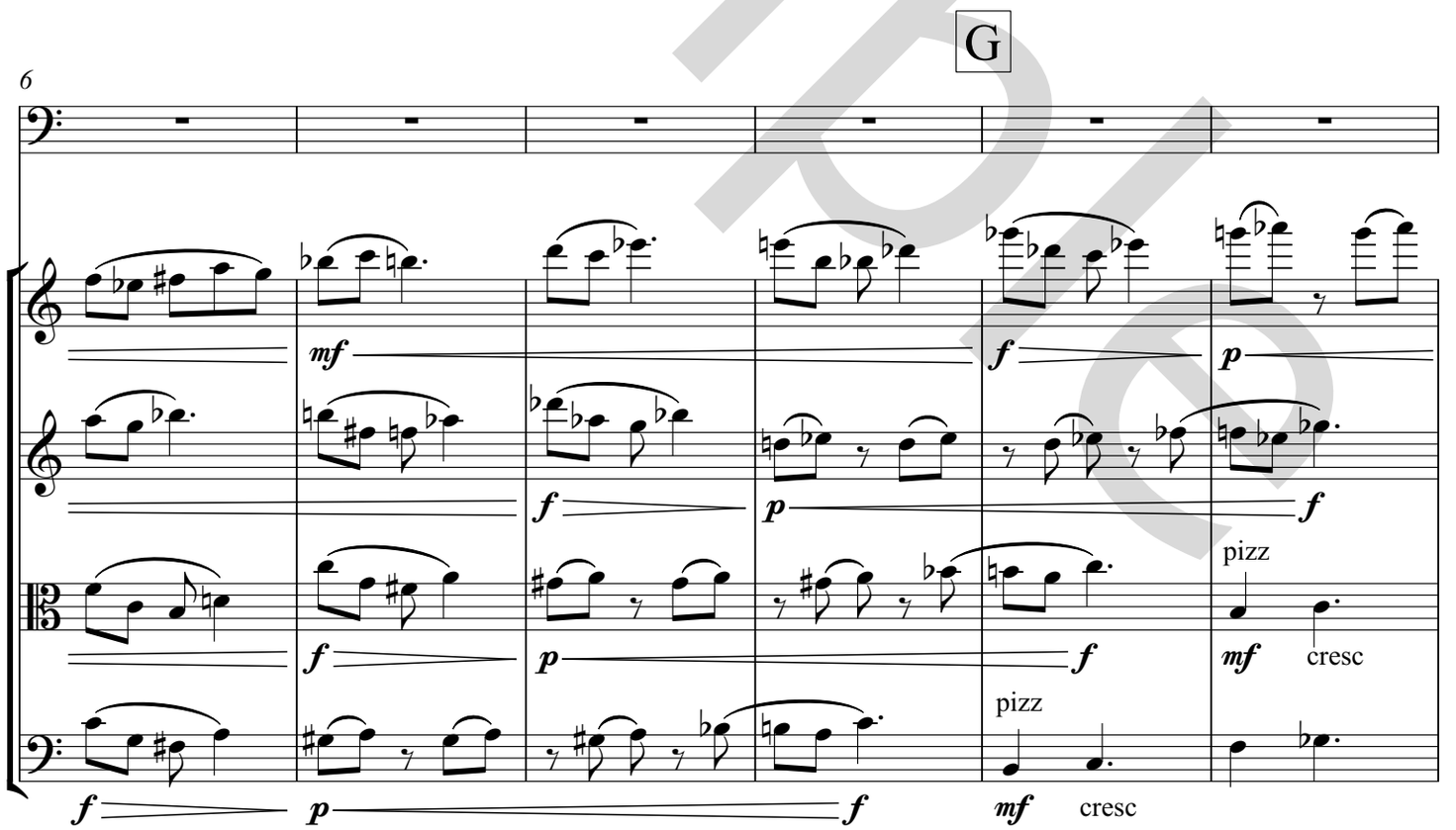
Sample

2. The trees are troubled

Presto

bar = 60





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