

# Songs from the End of the World

(2015)

- I. A long time alone
- II. Raveling
- III. At sea

John Mackey

text by A. E. Jaques



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## I. *A long time alone*

Dawn draws her rose-red fingers soft across the sleeping sky.  
Another day unasked-for, light pinking flesh untouched.

Long ago I loved to watch the water wake  
when first rays raced the waves.  
Morning warm-born in a moment.

But the sweetest second sours in solitude.  
Forever is a long time alone.

Summer murmurs memory of seasons sweet with cypress.  
Seabirds basking idle as the fishes dare to doze.

I used to sing with the insects  
answering sleet whirrup with trilling airs.  
But that was years ago,  
before the buzzing buried cicada sounds inside  
to rattle in the cluttered attic of never-spoken thoughts.

Even lovely liquid languor spoils.  
Forever is a long time alone.

Wade into the wine-dark sea and leave the lonely island;  
let salt swamp tears.  
Waters hold you for a while.

Skin gleams warm. Long-fallow flesh awakens  
but the ocean's kiss consumes.  
Soon there is no woman—only wave.

So the body brought back rushes out again,  
tide and time-taken as all things are.  
The sea is not a solace but a cell.

Forever is a long time alone.

## II. *Raveling*

When I found you, or you found me,  
both of us lost in the endless sea,  
then I healed you, and you healed me,  
two tattered souls stitched up lovingly.

Seven summers of sun,  
seven winters of wanting,  
seven springtimes as new as the dawn,  
seven autumns of falling  
deeper into your breath—  
seven years you are warp to my weft.

Only now is this paradise paradise.  
Only now is this living a life.  
Only now is there greenness and sweetness and air—  
lost and found ones, we two, what a pair.

As I lose you, and so lose me,  
finding I never had what I thought was free—  
how can you take what once you gave?  
I asked only love for the life I saved.

Seven years you were warp to my weft.  
Seven years, yet you leave me bereft.  
Seven years and I have nothing left.

You and I, we were bound up together.  
You and I wove a heaven from scars.  
You and I turned the darkness and lostness and pain  
into something worth living again.

Only you made this paradise paradise;  
Only you made this living a life;  
Only you gave me greenness and sweetness and air—  
All unraveling now, past repair.

III. *At sea*

Again, alone.  
Again, forever.  
Solitude and I, once more, together.

And now—forget?  
Or yet remember?  
If I hold fast will I still surrender?

Shall I cling to memory, and polish thoughts like bright stones?  
But every touch erodes them; to love their light is to lose it.  
Remembering. Dismembering.

Forget, then.  
Forget him.

Forget him.  
Forget, yes.

And cast away the empty oyster shell.  
Tide take him.  
But watch—who knows what waters wash home?

Forget him?  
Forget, how?

This cruel moon brings ghosts in waves now, to haunt me.  
Too-cruel moon brings ghosts to haunt me, to taunt me now.  
This tide that gives and takes and tolls the time,  
the time, the long and longing time alone.

I can't forget;  
I can't remember.  
The loss remains, so hard, so tender.

And all my rhymes are ravings,  
my words the wailing of a lost one,  
storm-tossed one.

The sea won't hear.  
The sky won't care.  
No different to them,  
my silence or song.

No words, so.  
Unheard, so.

Why go on then?  
Why cry this silence?

Alone.  
Alone.

All cast away now.  
Just ghosts to stay now.  
Alone, all lost at sea.

## Program Note

*The cycle is inspired by a passage in the Odyssey in which Odysseus, shipwrecked and near death, washes up on the shore of an island belonging to the nymph Kalypso. Homer's telling treats the ensuing interlude as just another bit of exotic travelogue, one of many adventures on Odysseus' long journey home; these three songs imagine what it meant to Kalypso herself, and are sung in her voice.*

### *i. A long time alone*

*Kalypso's island home is beautiful beyond imagining but remote beyond reach. Her immortality is thus an eternal solitude. The first song in the cycle, set before Odysseus' arrival, is her lament of this loneliness. Standing on her shore, she remembers long-gone days when she could still delight in her paradise, and tells of the slow erosion of sensation and even sense after endless ages alone.*

### *ii. Raveling*

*The second movement begins after Odysseus has been with Kalypso for seven years. She sings as she moves back and forth with a golden shuttle at her loom, weaving a tapestry—the work of all that time—that tells their story. At one end, the luminous threads show the near-dead castaway washed ashore; nearby the nymph nurses him back to health. Flowers and fruit, ripe and radiant, tumble through images of the love they found together. But the simple happiness of the scene and the song curdles: Odysseus wants to return to his home, leaving Kalypso to her solitude; nothing she has given or can give means anything to him anymore. She is shattered, but he is cold. So Kalypso returns to her loom, singing again, but now unraveling the tapestry, unmaking the document of love.*

### *iii. At sea*

*In the final song, Kalypso watches Odysseus sail away on a boat she has given him, born by a breeze she has called up to fill a sail she has fashioned from the unmade tapestry. Waves carry him toward the horizon, and her loneliness washes in again.*

- program note by A. E. Jaques (please credit A. E. Jaques when reproducing program note)

World premiere November 19, 2015, with Lindsay Kesselman, soprano, and the University of North Carolina Greensboro Wind Ensemble, conducted by Kevin Gerald.

# Songs from the End of the World

text by A. E. Jaques

## I. A long time alone

John Mackey

piano reduction by Liz Ames

$\text{♩} = 46$ , flowing, very freely

Piano

4

Pno.

8

S. Solo

Dawn draws her rose red fin - gers soft a - cross the sleep - ing sky.

Pno.

12

S. Solo

A - noth - er day un - asked for light pink - ing flesh un - touched

Pno.

*poco rit.*

16 *mp* *mf*

S. Solo Long a - go I loved to watch the wa - ter wake when first rays raced the waves.

*a tempo* *p*

Pno.

19 *mf*

S. Solo Mor - ning warm-born in a mo - ment.

*mf* *mp*

Pno.

23 *a little slower* *p* *mf* *mp* *a tempo*

S. Solo But the sweet-est sec-ond sours in sol - i - tude.

*poco rit.* *a little slower* *a tempo*

*pp* *p*

Pno.

27 *rit.* *very freely* *p* 3 3

S. Solo For - ev - er is a long time For - ev - er is a long time a long time

*rit.* *very freely*

*mp* *pp*

Pno.

31

S. Solo

a - lone a - lone a - lone a - lone a -

Pno.

*pp* *mp*

36 *♩. = 46, flowing, very freely*

S. Solo

lone Sum-mer mur-murs mem-o - ry of

*mp*

Pno.

*p* *pp*

39

S. Solo

sea-sons sweet with cy-press. Sea - birds bask-ing id - le as the fish - es dare to doze.

Pno.

42 *♩. = 60 circa*

S. Solo

I used to sing with the in - seets an - swer-ing slee slee whir-rups with trill-ing airs

*f*

Pno.

*♩. = 60 circa*



4

45

*poco rit.* *a tempo* ***ff***

S. Solo

but that was long a - go be - fore the buzz - ing bur - ied ci - ca - da sounds in - side to

Pno.

48

*poco a poco dim.* upper note optional if balance is problematic *rit.* ***mf***

S. Solo

rat - tle in the clutt - ered att - ic of nev - er spo - ken thoughts Ev - en love - ly li - quid lang - uor

Pno.

*poco a poco dim.* *rit.*

52

$\text{♩} = 56, \text{circa}$  ***mp*** *p* ***pp***

S. Solo

spoils For - ev - er is a long time For - ev - er is a

Pno.

$\text{♩} = 56, \text{circa}$  ***pp*** *f* *p*

57

*poco a poco rit.* *allarg.*  $\text{♩} = 46$  ***ff***

S. Solo

long time a long time For - ev - er is a long time a - lone.

Pno.

*poco a poco rit.* *allarg.*  $\text{♩} = 46$  ***ff***

61

S. Solo

*allarg.* *a tempo* *allarg.* *a tempo*

Pno.

66

S. Solo

*a tempo* *p*

Wade in - to the

Pno.

*l.v.* *a tempo* *p*

70

S. Solo

wine - dark sea and leave the lon - e - ly is - land;

Pno.

*poco rit.* *p*

73

S. Solo

*a tempo*

let salt swamp tears. Wa - ters hold you for a

Pno.

*a tempo*

76 *poco rit.* *a tempo*

S. Solo while Skin gleams warm; long - fal-low flesh a - wa-kens but the

Pno. *pp*

79 *p*

S. Solo o-cyan's kiss con sumes. Soon there is no wo-man on ly

Pno. *mp p mf mp*

83 *p*

S. Solo wave? So the bo - dy brought back

Pno. *mf p*

87

S. Solo rush-es out a-gain tide and time ta - ken as all things are.

Pno.

92 *rit.* *mp* *pp* *a little slower (brief)* *mf* *mp*

S. Solo

The sea is not a sol-ace but a cell

*rit.* *a little slower*

Pno.

96 *very freely* *p* *pp*

S. Solo

For-ev-er is a long time For-ev-er is a long time a long time

*very freely*

Pno.

100

S. Solo

a-lone a-lone a-lone a-lone

Pno.

104 *very slow* *molto allarg.*

S. Solo

a - - - lone

*very slow* *molto allarg.*

Pno.

## II. Raveling

*♩* = 66

Soprano Solo

*mp*

When I found you, or you found me, both of us lost in the end-less

Piano

*mf* ————— *mp*

*pp*

*p*

5

S. Solo

sea, \_\_\_\_\_ then I healed you, and you healed me,

Pno.

*p* ————— *pp* *mp* *p*

9

S. Solo

two tat-tered souls stitched up lov - ing - ly. Ah \_\_\_\_\_ Se-ven

Pno.

*mp* *p*

12

S. Solo

sum-mers of sun, se - ven win-ters of want - ing, se - ven

Pno.

14

S. Solo

spring-times as new as the dawn, se - ven

Pno.

*mp*

16

S. Solo

au-tumns of fall - ing dee-per in - to your breath Se - ven

Pno.

18

S. Solo

years you are warp to my weft.

*poco rit.* *a tempo*

Pno.

*mp* *mf* *mp*

10 *mf*

S. Solo

Ah

On - ly

*rit.* *p*

Pno. *mp* *mf* *pp*

22 ♩ = 60 circa, freely

S. Solo

now is this pa - ra-dise pa - ra - dise. On - ly now is this liv - ing a

♩ = 60 circa, freely

Pno.

25

S. Solo

life On - ly now is there green - ness and

Pno. *mp*

27

S. Solo

sweet - ness and air Lost and found ones, we

Pno. *p*

29

*poco rit.*

♩ = 66

S. Solo

two, what a pair.

Measures 29-31: Vocal line in 4/4 time. Measure 29: quarter note G4, quarter note A4. Measure 30: quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Measure 31: quarter rest, quarter note D5. Dynamics: *poco rit.*

Pno.

Measures 29-31: Piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. Measure 29: eighth-note triplet in right hand, quarter notes in left hand. Measure 30: eighth-note triplet in right hand, quarter notes in left hand. Measure 31: eighth-note triplet in right hand, quarter notes in left hand. Dynamics: *mp*.

32

Pno.

Measures 32-34: Piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. Measure 32: quarter notes in right hand, eighth-note triplet in left hand. Measure 33: quarter notes in right hand, eighth-note triplet in left hand. Measure 34: quarter notes in right hand, eighth-note triplet in left hand. Dynamics: *mp*, *p*, *pp*, *mp*.

35

Pno.

Measures 35-37: Piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. Measure 35: eighth-note triplet in right hand, eighth-note triplet in left hand. Measure 36: quarter notes in right hand, eighth-note triplet in left hand. Measure 37: quarter notes in right hand, eighth-note triplet in left hand. Dynamics: *p*, *mp*, *mf*. Includes *l.v.* marking.

38

S. Solo

As I lose you, and so lose

Measures 38-40: Vocal line in 4/4 time. Measure 38: quarter rest, quarter note G4. Measure 39: quarter note A4, quarter note B4. Measure 40: quarter note C5, quarter note D5. Dynamics: *mp*.

Pno.

Measures 38-40: Piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. Measure 38: quarter notes in right hand, eighth-note triplet in left hand. Measure 39: quarter notes in right hand, eighth-note triplet in left hand. Measure 40: quarter notes in right hand, eighth-note triplet in left hand. Dynamics: *pp*, *p*, *mf*.



41

S. Solo

me, find-ing I ne - ver had what I

Pno.

*p* *mp*

43

S. Solo

thought was free how

Pno.

*pp* *mf*

45

S. Solo

can you take what once you gave? I

Pno.

*p* *mp*

47

S. Solo

asked on - ly love for the life I saved.

Pno.

*p* *mf* *mp* *mf*

49 *poco rit.* *mp* *a tempo*

S. Solo

Se - ven years you were warp to my

Pno.

*mp* *mf* *p* *mp*

51 *mf* *cresc.*

S. Solo

weft. Se - ven years, yet you leave me be - reft. Se - ven

Pno.

*mf* *mp* *f*

54

S. Solo

years and I have no - thing

Pno.

*mf*

56 *f* *rit.* *ff*

S. Solo

left. You and

Pno.

*f* *ff*

59 *a tempo, very free* *allarg.*

*a tempo, very free*

S. Solo

I, we were bound up to - geth - - - er You and

*a tempo, very free* *allarg.*

*a tempo, very free*

Pno.

*f*

62

S. Solo

I wove a hea - ven from scars. You and

Pno.

64

S. Solo

I turned the dark - ness and lost - ness and pain

*rit.*

Pno.

*ff*

67 *slower, ♩ = 52 circa, still free*

S. Solo

in - to some - thing worth liv - ing a - gain On - ly

*slower, ♩ = 52 circa, still free*

*rit.*

*pp*

Pno.

*p* *pp*

71 *a tempo* (♩ = 52 circa)

S. Solo

you made this par - a - dise; par - a - dise; On - ly you made this liv - ing a life; On - ly

*a tempo* (♩ = 52 circa)

Pno.

*pp*

*una corda*

75

S. Solo

you gave me green-ness and sweet-ness and air All un - rav - el - ing

Pno.

79 *rit.* ♩ = 54 circa

S. Solo

now; past re - pain

Pno.

*pp*

82

S. Solo

Ooo

Pno.

*rit. like a music box slowing down*

### III. At sea

*♩ = 52, rubato*

*ppp* *p* *pp*

Soprano Solo

A - gain, a - lone. A - gain, for - ev - er. Sol - i - tude and I, once more, to -

*♩ = 52, rubato*

Piano

*pp*

*1/2 Ped.*

6

*p* *mp*

S. Solo

geth - er. And now for - get? Or yet re - mem - ber? If I hold fast will I still sur - ren - der? Shall

Pno.

*pp*

*Ped. norm.* *Ped.*

11

*with a little more motion*

S. Solo

I cling to mem - 'ry, and pol - ish thoughts. like bright stones? But ev - 'ry touch e - rodes

*with a little more motion*

Pno.

*p* *mp*

16 *p* *mf*

S. Solo  
them; to love their light is to lose it, Re - mem -

Pno. *p* *mp*

20 *mp*

S. Solo  
b'ring Dis - mem - b'ring

Pno. *mf* *pp* *p*

24 *pp*

S. Solo  
For get, then. For - get him.

Pno. *pp* *pp*

*ob. solo, singing*

30 ♩ = 84, *rubato*

S. Solo

Pno. ♩ = 84, *rubato*  
*primarily harp voice until m. 34*  
*p* *sim.*

33 *pp* *p*

S. Solo For - get him. For - get, yes. And

Pno. *pp*  
(bass pizz)

38

S. Solo cast a - way the emp - ty oy - ster shell. Tide take

Pno. *p* *pp* *p*

43 *mp* *pp* *p*

S. Solo him. But watch who knows what wa - ters wash home? For -

Pno. *ppp* *p*  
ob. solo

48 *mp* *mf* *p*

S. Solo - get him? For - get, how? This cru - el moon brings

Pno. *mp* *mf* *p*  
with increasing urgency

53

S. Solo

ghosts in waves now, — to — haunt me. Too cruel —

Pno.

*mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

58

S. Solo

— moon brings ghosts to haunt me.

Pno.

*mf* *p* *mp* *p*

*ob. solo*

63

S. Solo

to taunt me now. — This tide that gives and

Pno.

*p* *pp* *mp*

68

S. Solo

takes and tolls the time, the time, the long and long - ing time a -

Pno.

*mf* *p* *pp*



72 *allarg.*

S. Solo lone. I can't for - - get,

Pno. *allarg.* *mp* *pp*

75

S. Solo I can't re - mem - - ber.

Pno.

78

S. Solo The loss re - mains, so hard, so

Pno. *pp*

81

S. Solo ten - - der. And all my

Pno. *rit.* *mf* *a tempo* *p* *mp*

84

S. Solo

rhymes are rav - - - - - ings my

Pno.

*mp*

88

S. Solo

words the wail - - - - - ing of

Pno.

91

S. Solo

lost one, storm - - - - - tossed one.

Pno.

*poco a poco accel. cresc.*

*poco a poco accel. cresc.*

94

S. Solo

Pno.

*rit.*

*f*

97 *f* ♩ = 60  
 S. Solo The sea won't hear. The sky

*allarg.* ♩ = 60  
 Pno. *ff* *mf* *mf*

102 *ff* *mp* *p*  
 S. Solo won't care. No different

Pno. *ff* *p* *mp* *p*

106 *pp* *p*  
 S. Solo to them, my si - lence or song. No words, so. Un -

Pno. *pp*

110 *pp* *p* ♩ = 72, *rubato*  
 S. Solo heard, so.

Pno. *p* *mp* *p* ♩ = 72, *rubato*

115 *p*  $\text{♩} = 60, \textit{rubato}$

S. Solo Why go on then? Why cry this si - lence?

Pno. *pp*  $\text{♩} = 60, \textit{rubato}$   
*Harp* *p* *mp*

120

S. Solo A - lone. A - lone.

Pno. *pp* *p* *mp* *molto rit.*

125  $\text{♩} = 52, \textit{rubato}$  *p* *mp* *mp* *crying out, molto espress.*

S. Solo All cast a way now. Just ghosts to stay now. A - lone

Pno.  $\text{♩} = 52, \textit{rubato}$  *p* *mf* *allarg.* *p* *mf*

131 *f* *mp*  $\text{♩} = 76, \textit{poco a poco rit.}$  *p*

S. Solo all lost at sea.

Pno.  $\text{♩} = 76, \textit{poco a poco rit.}$  *mp* *p* *pp*