

“In any age, life has to be lived
before we can know what it is.”

--Lisel Mueller,
“The Triumph of Life”

Program Note

Commissioned by the Distinguished Concerts International New York Premiere Project and premiered at Carnegie Hall in January 2016 with the Distinguished Concerts Singers International and award-winning Nashville bluegrass band Dailey & Vincent, *Mortals & Angels: A Bluegrass Te Deum* is now available in this revised version.

The Te Deum is a Latin prayer that many composers have set to music. But never before has there been a Te Deum for chorus and Bluegrass band. In Latin, Te Deum means 'to God', praise to God, and in the first words of the prayer, all creation praises God. Mortals and Angels praise God. There's something about angels; the ancient idea of winged messengers occurs in almost every religion. Representations of angels in art tend to be human shapes with wings added, and in many traditions, angels willingly guide us. We mortals, however, have problems with guidance. How on earth would angels know better what we should or should not do, given their immortality and their ability to hover, appear and disappear? We will eventually die, while they fly on and on. In this setting, the Angels are represented by the choir, the Mortals by the band. And there are the Kids - sometimes Angels, sometimes very mortal. And out in the audience: Mortals? or Angels?

Duration c. 38:00

Cast of Characters

The Mortals: a Bluegrass band

The Angels: Adult chorus, possibly in various shades of white and cream and light gray, not uniform but offering the suggestion that angels are individuals

The Archangel: a baritone soloist from the chorus

The Kids: Treble choir

The Conductor: dressed either in standard concert wear (preferable) or in keeping with the dress of the Bluegrass band. (No “Heehaw” costume.)

Movements

I.	ANGEL OF GOD	1	
II.	TE DEUM	5	
III.	WHO MAKES THE SUN TO RISE?	32	
IV.	HOLIER THAN THOU		40
V.	IDUMEA	60	
VI.	BAD DAYS ARE COMING	69	
VII.	WE DON'T STAY AFRAID FOR LONG	77	
VIII.	DOWN TO THE RIVER	91	
IX.	JACOB WRESTLED WITH THE ANGEL	103	
X.	EV'RY STEP TO HEAVEN IS HEAVEN	117	
XI.	ANGELS HOV'RING 'ROUND	134	
XII.	ANGEL BAND	147	

Introduction

CONDUCTOR: Good evening. We're about to perform **Mortals & Angels: a Bluegrass Te Deum**. The Te Deum is a Latin prayer that many composers have set to music for choruses to sing. But never before has there been a Te Deum for chorus and Bluegrass band. In Latin, Te Deum means 'to God', praise to God, and in the first words of the prayer, all creation praises God. Mortals and Angels praise God. If you bring Mortals and Angels together, you may get a contest or an argument. Who can sing the best? Who has a better grip on reality? So, the Angels are up here (*indicates risers*) and the Mortals are in the band. And standing behind the band, the Kids (*indicates treble choir.*) You know how kids are – sometimes Angels, sometimes very mortal. And out in the audience: Mortals? Or Angels?