Programme note

**Song of Alcestis (2007)**

**Douglas Finch**

*Song of Alcestis* (2007)was written for the *Trinity Cello Ensemble*, and first performed at the Chipping Camden Festival in June 2008 with soprano Alessia Mankovskaya, conducted by Richard Markson.

For the text, I drew on a particular scene from Euripides’ Alcestis, using William Arrowsmith’s translation. In this part of the drama, Alcestis, who has agreed to die in place of her husband, says goodbye to her family. I have turned what was a conversation into a monologue – a farewell speech accentuated by lamentations and admonishments to the Gods, as well as a description of her final battle with Death while she is led across the river Styx by Charon, the boatman. The text is as follows:

*O sun*

*Sweet shining light*

*White clouds swelling wheeling in the blue*

*The god of light looks down and sees us suffering.*

*Why, why? How have we hurt the gods that we should die?*

*Sweet earth of Iolkos*

*O earth where I was born*

*O house that sheltered me where I was a girl*

*How have we hurt the gods that we should suffer so?*

*I see the black water and the dead lake,*

*the boat beached on the sand*

*and look Charon there at the rudder calling me*

*Why are you waiting Alcestis?*

*It is time to leave hurry Alcestis come*

*Don’t you hear him calling?*

*This is a bitter crossing.*

*O gods, what have we done that we should suffer so?*

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