

MUSIC FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH
COMPOSED BY JIM MINCHIN

seven
whole
days



SEVEN WHOLE DAYS

All music composed and
© James Minchin (b. 1942)

Just after he recorded his first album *Move Two Mix* Jim Minchin moved in January 1968 to Singapore. As a junior priest he was apprenticed to St Andrew's Cathedral, which was for him – and maybe one or two others – a fantastic blessing! The first year living on the equator was pretty intense: a hot and humid climate, with “different cultures, diverse faiths, the babble of many tongues”. He had to take each day as it came, to discern God's purposes amid all the bustle of what initially was an alien world, whether of food or custom or ambience.

Singapore was undergoing rapid change – only two-plus years earlier summarily separated from Malaysia – and the social and political landscape was being drastically re-engineered.

Yet, slowly he discovered the joy of identifying kindred spirits, communicating with and beyond each other in the universal language of musicians, poets and other people of artistic bent or sensitive attitude, using their own or borrowed resources to increase connection and empathy. Here were new colleagues and friends, of Chinese, Indian, Eurasian and Malay background, some deeply religious, others not, but all keen to live and explore life fully. Many took pleasure in singing or playing instruments, whether formally trained or, as with Jim himself, amateurs with musical souls looking to find mates.

After that first tumultuous year in Singapore, Jim returned briefly to Melbourne, already resolved to build on *Move Two Mix* and compose new songs – this time relying more on fresh new words than old favourites – shaped by the broader worlds he was inhabiting, populated

by ecumenical Christians and other people of goodwill who wanted to celebrate the wonder of our life and the challenge of communities confronting injustice with deliberate and determinedly just resilience, and responding to violence with as much confidence as possible in God's peace and promise of hope.

Hence *Seven Whole Days*. With vocalists Margaret Haggart and Chris Bence, Jim laid the first tracks in Melbourne before returning to Singapore to complete the album with singer Chan Ming Lye from Kuala Lumpur (later a principal on Broadway with 'Miss Saigon'), and charming newcomer Melinda Lim who sings Bird of heaven. All the master tapes were finally returned to Melbourne for mixing by John Sayers of Bill Armstrong Studios.

Here is the result...

1 COME, LORD JESUS

(Miriam Therese Winter)

the call for Jesus to return and bring the world out of conflicted night to its senses in God's light

2 YOU CAN'T DO MORE THAN THAT

(John Perkins)

words from a 1960s NZ Youth Assembly for Asian Churches, noting that the man giving his life 'strung up on a stake in the sun' is the only full combatant against racism, hunger, war

3 BIRD OF HEAVEN (Sydney Carter)

Jesus flies into our human life to bring the love and freedom God offers, but cannot be caged or trapped in the doctrines and rituals of religion: he wants us to travel on with him

4 A SKY WITHOUT SUNLIGHT

(James Thiem)

"My Lord was a brave man in a broken world", true brother to all, even sinners, even fools, and continues to offer companionship and belonging to God to those seeking a sunlit homeland

5 LIKE THE DEER THAT YEARNS

(Grail/Gelineau text)

the exile who yearns and thirsts for God learns to hope and trust in God's coming vindication

6 DANCETHERE (W B Yeats)

to a child dancing in the wind

the child's dance is oblivious of fools' triumph, love lost or, facing harvest, the best labourer dead

two years later

the poet could have warned the child of disillusionment, but he has the "barbarous tongue" of age

7 KING OF GLORY (George Herbert)

"seven whole days, not one in seven" the poet praises God for divine fidelity and forgiveness

8 START AGAIN (Roland Giese)

Jesus released the paralytic, the blind man, the epileptic child – and frees us today – to start again

9 LOOK OUT ON THE SEA (James Thiem)

we humans can work, pray and love when we are free, and free when we can work, pray and love

10 PSALM 126: ON OUR LIPS WERE SONGS (Grail/Gelineau text)

deliverance brings God's people songs & laughter, like good harvest from seed sown in dry land

11 BROTHERS IN A NEW LAND

(Peter Field)

joy at building fellowship in a new land overcomes outward differences, origins and divisions

12 MAN IS LONELY BY BIRTH

(Miriam Therese Winter)

our restless, reckless, capricious heart longs to find its home but will only find rest in God

13 COME, LOVE, CAROLLING

(Sydney Carter)

'come, love, carolling along in me!' always, everywhere, 'I carry the maker of the world in me!'

14 instrumental reprise of KING OF GLORY

SINGERS

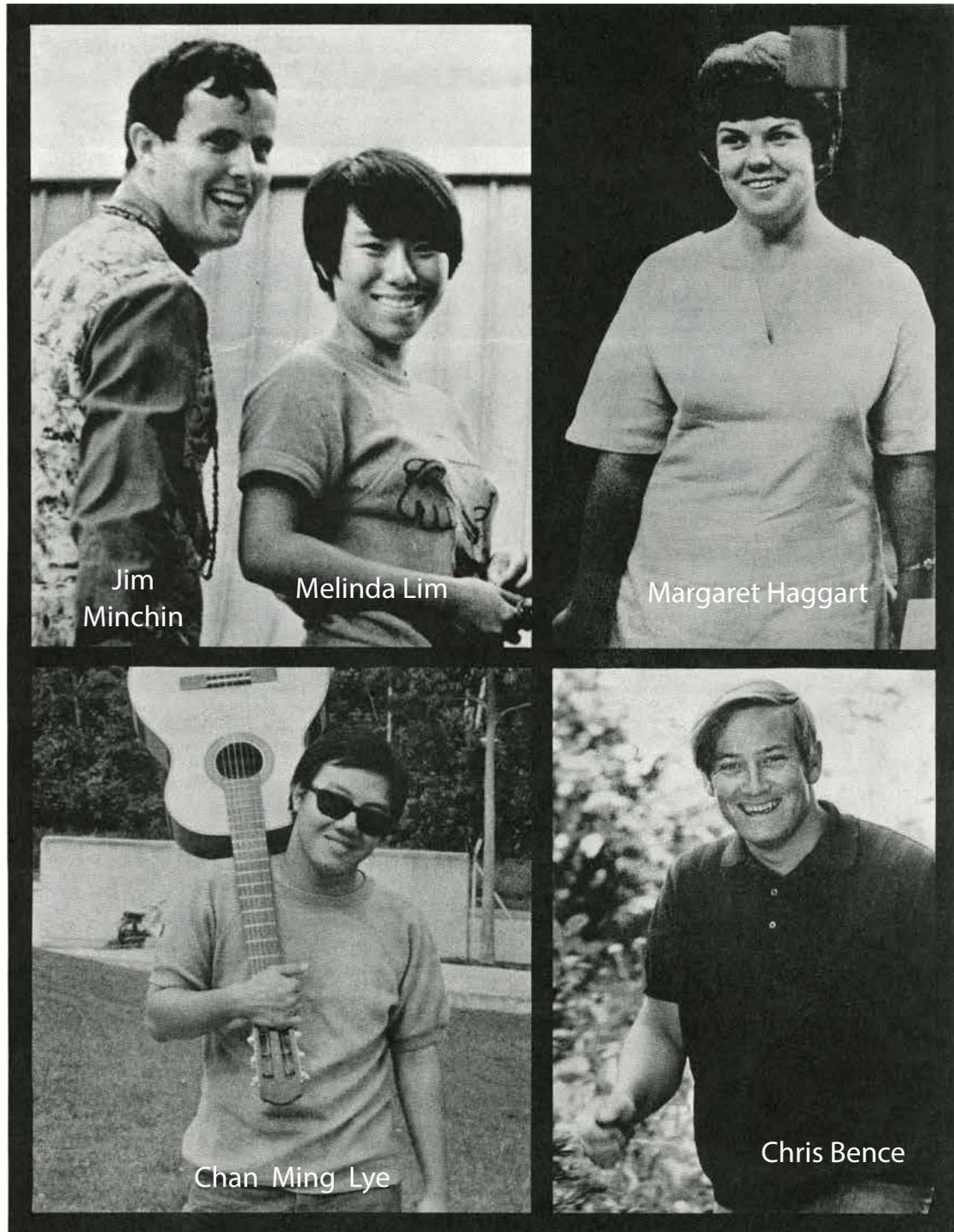
Chan Ming Lye
Margaret Haggart
Chris Bence
Melinda Lim

PLAYERS

Jim Minchin: piano
Lee Tzu Kuang: guitar, glockenspiel
Horace Wee: guitar, flute, sax
Peter Castle: guitar
Ray Elliott: percussion
Liam Bradley: vibes
Solway Love: flute
Joy Fletcher: cello
Nick Alexander: spinet, marimba
Lim Su Chong: bass
Hamish Hughes: bass

Seven Whole Days, Jim Minchin's second album, was recorded in several sessions during 1969 ... in January and March at Bill Armstrong Studios, South Melbourne with sound engineer John Sayers and twice at Life Records Inc., Jurong, Singapore with Paul Phoon at the controls. Final mixing took place in Melbourne. The album was produced by Martin Wright for Move RecordsDS

Released in 1969 by Move Records



Looking back on 'MOVE TWO MIX' (1968) and 'SEVEN WHOLE DAYS' (1969)

The 1960s were perfect for people with any kind of music in their soul, especially for those free spirits who wanted to blossom in personal faith and to explore quizzically prevailing mores as they saw their society – and themselves – grow more open, multi-cultural and plural in outlook: I was one such – a thoughtful if isolated middle-class lad in Melbourne. Somehow I, we, felt free to follow our own stars, in my case the God of Jesus Christ as I prepared to become a priest, while hoping to stay attuned to my evolving inner self. Musically this meant listening, dancing, playing, singing, composing, in my case only as a determined amateur: I was preoccupied by more pressing life concerns.

In 1962 I needed contemporary hymns and songs to accompany a weekly 'mission' service in College Chapel. Finding the cupboard bare I decided to take some old hymn words and put jazzy tunes to them, and to improvise with friends playing instruments other than the monarchical organ (which, by the way, I loved, and still do). Later I was moved by the example of Sydney Carter and others of his ilk to track down texts for hymns and songs, not only for worship but to give wing to wider more 'secular' personal and social-justice themes. To my surprise, I began to receive requests from all over Australia – most denominations, the ABC – and indeed the world – Inuit and

Argentinians, Taiwanese and Germans – to take up, perform and record my music – which I had thought would only be a seven-day wonder. Perhaps it would stretch to seven years!

The 1960s found the Western-derived churches everywhere – Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant, Pentecostal – facing increased 'secular' confidence in science, commerce and popular culture in tandem with decreased trust in exclusive and monochrome patterns of worship and liturgy (including music), belief and ethics. Some church communities welcomed this shift: the Second Vatican Council opened windows to the world 'outside', many Christians examined the Bible more critically and articulated their beliefs with greater care and humanity, and got involved in the challenges of the day alongside people of goodwill. Others bemoaned the shift and either withdrew or hoped gimmickry might stave off the tide. I was delighted, knowing that music could give depth and energy to this process of sifting and renewal.

In 1968 I was assigned to Singapore and Malaysia, and, thereafter, unexpected and vibrant perspectives kept coming into view! As well as being overwhelmed by the social engineering of newly-independent Singapore, I found myself caught up in widening circles of music, art and literature:

from West, East and every continent, ancient and modern, 'religious' and 'secular', popular or esoteric, recorded and 'live'. Eventually I was invited to be text editor of *Sound the Bamboo*, a marvellous compendium of hymns from every kind of church in every part of 'Asia', published in 2000; for the first time my previously resented Latin and Greek verse composition came into its own, fitting English paraphrases to weird metres in the original music!

And now, more than fifty years after I began to get involved, I am overwhelmed by the wealth of good music for worship and devotion, to celebrate life in the light of eternity; music not only for individual enjoyment but also for community celebration. Of course, there's also a lot of junk music. In either case, some lasts, some doesn't! From my own ongoing if fitful journey of composition, mostly away from the public domain, it is a thrill – as I move into retirement and old age – to bring my music once again to light of day via concert and recording, to discover wonderfully talented artists and friendly audiences who are happy to join me on the way.

Jim Minchin (b.1942)
Geelong, June 2016