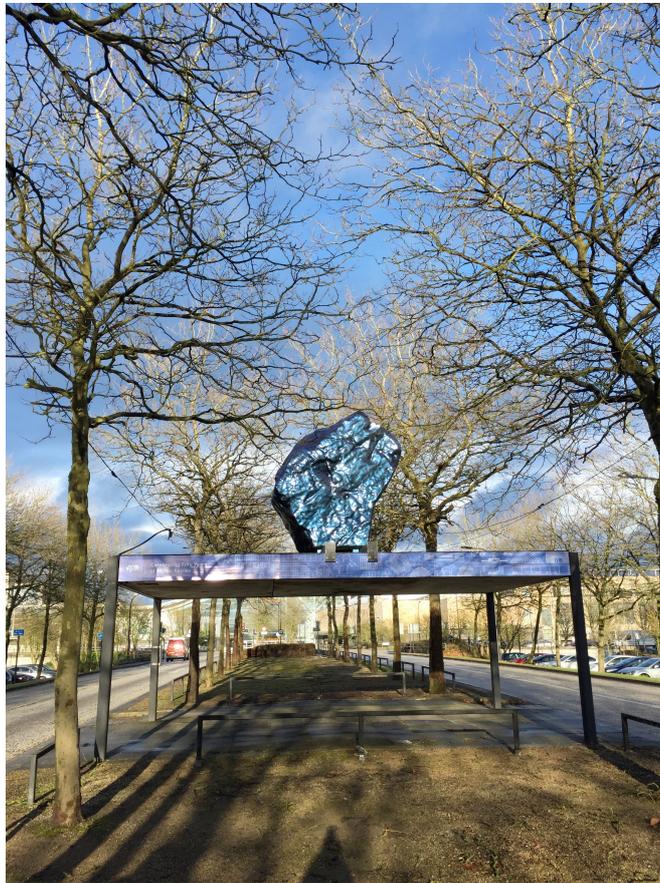


Full Score

# A different kind of urban

For SATB choir, brass ensemble, timpani and percussion



**Music: Liz Lane**  
**Words: Judi Moore**



## Programme notes

Like many, I had certain pre-conceptions about Milton Keynes when I first approached writing *A different kind of urban*; however, I have since had the good fortune to be guided into a deeper understanding of the many strands that make up this remarkable town. A recce visit with The Open University Choir conductor Bill Strang and lyricist Judi Moore in February 2017, both long-time residents, opened my eyes to a rich wealth of history when we visited key artefacts of the town (none of which I will divulge here, as it would take away from the excellent narrative of Judi's lyrics!).

*A different kind of urban* is in five movements. The first, '1: what do we celebrate?', outlines an introductory scene, whilst '2: Up in the air' and '3: Down on the ground' respectively showcase the work's main themes, inspired by the town's juxtaposition of old and new. The material within these two movements sets the tone for '4: In the heart' and '5: An ending, but not the end', where the themes are revisited, becoming more interlinked until they are at least in part merged at the music's culmination. The lyrics of '4: In the heart' are interpreted to give a sense of drawing things together, representing a more intimate and proud knowledge of the town.

The use of brass, too, plays a part in a representation of the complex and underlying layers of the town; becoming more substantial as the music progresses, evolving a relationship between choir and brass which in itself changes, just as the town has these past 50 years.

Liz Lane, 2017

[www.lizlane.co.uk](http://www.lizlane.co.uk)

Front cover photo: MK Menhir, Midsummer Boulevard, Milton Keynes, February 2017.

# A different kind of urban

## 1: What do we celebrate?

We celebrate a different kind of urban,  
something half a century old now, yet still brand new;  
which embraces its past and its deeper past,  
always changing, always growing;  
still in a state of flux and roil, as it has always been.  
Still excited, still exciting; fresh and hopeful for the future.

Everything begins with imagination –

## 2: Up in the air

Imagine: you are a bird flying home  
from the south, as the day begins to go  
and *there* beneath you, the whole of the town  
lies like a complicated plaid below.

Behind the town, the remnants of the day  
clamour a fanfare of glorious colour  
(orange, red, purple) in the western sky.  
Ephemeral. A *burst* of energy.

You think the show is over now, as twilight  
deepens; ah, but wait! The orange streetlights  
of our town begin to echo nature,  
challenging the glory of the sunset.

First, the margins of the main roads come alight,  
then the town's estates begin to twinkle.  
So many! As the twilight deepens *on*  
they come, and *on*, like an ostinato  
starting with a single voice, which grows  
until the whole choir joins in song.

\*

Through the pattern of lit streets, other lights are threading now;  
sinuous as prayers floating on a holy river.

The white lights flow towards us and the red lights flow away.  
And for a magic moment we cannot process what we see,

until we, too, start for home, when it at once comes clear  
what these streams are. They do not float on any holy river;  
they grind and growl and rumble upon asphalt roads,  
for they are simply cars, cars, cars, and yet more cars

and you and we and they are going home.

### 3: Down on the ground

Our history is woven through the earth we stand on,  
enriching our lives and the lives which came before.  
Beneath our feet lie its warp and weft, a pattern  
of primeval ley lines, alignments of constellations  
and drovers' roads, channelling ancient powers.

Canals, those engineering marvels, cut through  
the land remorselessly. Beside them run the railways  
triumphs of shaped steel, superceding them,  
and superceded in their turn by tarmacked roads.

We live at a crossroads of Albion.  
Everything meets here: road, rail and water,  
travelling north and south, east and west.  
We are pinned in our place by the arrow  
of Watling Street, the London Road, the A5,  
thrumming to the spinning of a million wheels.

\*

Up it, roaring mad, Boudicca came.

Where else would a grieving Edward stay  
but here with us, the night he brought the  
body of his dear Queen Eleanor  
to London. Her crosses bear witness.

Crookback Dick kidnapped his nephews here  
when he through trickery acquired the crown  
he could not keep long, at last in his turn  
hast'ning up Watling Street to Bosworth Field.

From all points of the compass Dons and  
crossworders came to crack Nazi codes  
in World War Two. (Ten thousand people  
working there – and no-one ever knew.)

Be assured, citizens of this new place  
we are no backwater of history here.

## 4: In the heart

This is the last and greatest of the new towns.  
Architects, those techno-mages, drew up their plans  
the very year of the summer of love,  
when there were still loon pants, and long hair  
and money and vision. They made the town  
out of straight lines and circles and low rise homes,  
gave it good green lungs to help us breathe,  
trees to scrub the air clean; open space  
where we may feel the grass beneath our feet,

As the town rose up out of the mud,  
Baby Boomers arrived here in droves.  
A unique generation of optimistic children,  
rosy with free education and the welfare state,  
we said, "let's put the show on right here!" And we did.  
In the middle of nowhere, we put on the shows,  
the displays, the gigs and the festivals.  
And we still do.

\*

Those funky architects of '67 knew  
there is a little druid in us all  
(it never truly leaves the human soul)  
so built a boulevard to celebrate  
the sunrise at midsummer.

So we whose town this is,  
we techno-pagans  
of every faith, or none,  
know that there  
at the city centre Belvedere,  
as an affirmation  
the sun will rise  
as a ball of *fire*,  
on the longest day of the year.

And again in November  
we gather there together,  
to mark the return of winter  
on Guy Fawkes Night with *fire*.

As the fireworks burst above us  
we stand silently in wonder,  
shoulder to shoulder  
in the dark.

At those times we realise  
the town's soul is older  
even than the Druids  
and not new at all.

## 5: An ending, but not the end

In this new *place* to live  
we look for a new *way* to live  
and cherish our diversity.

The deep past of our town,  
and its continuing modernity  
inform our lives from day to day.

What will our town's next great story be?

## **INSTRUMENTATION:**

**SATB Choir**

**4 Trumpets**

**3 Trombones**

**Tuba**

**Percussion 1: Timpani and Tambourine**

**Percussion 2: Suspended Cymbal, Triangle (medium), Snare Drum**

**Percussion 3: Xylophone, Glockenspiel, Cymbals, Triangle (low), Tambourine, Sizzle Cymbal (or Vibraslap), Wood Block**

Duration: 22 minutes approx.

Score is in C

*A different kind of urban* was commissioned by The Open University Choir to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Milton Keynes and first performed by The Open University Choir and Brass Ensemble, conductor Bill Strang, The Hub Theatre, Open University, Milton Keynes, 23 November 2017.

The commission was made possible by donations from members and friends of the choir: Pauline Barnes, Peter Barnes, Juliet Baxter, Gill Booth, Helen Boyce, Rhiannon Davies, Felicity Head, Barbara Hodgson, Tim Hunt, Allan Jones, Mary Lea, Jan Lloyd, Hilary MacQueen, Eleanor Milburn, Steve and Jenny Potter, Robin Rowles, Bill Strang, Jan Taylor.